

The portrayal of Working-Class speech in British film:

a study of accent in British films from the 1960s and the 2000s

Master's Thesis



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Sammendrag

Målet med denne oppgaven har vært å se på arbeiderklasseuttale i britiske filmer over en periode på 40 år. Oppgavens tittel kan oversettes til norsk som ”Fremstillingen av arbeiderklasseuttale i britisk film: en studie av aksent i britiske filmer fra 1960- og 2000-tallet”.

Hypotesen som underbygger oppgaven har følgende ordlyd: *Det er forventet å finne færre tilfeller av ikke-standard uttaletrekk i de gamle filmene, og flere tilfeller av disse i de nye filmene.* Hypotesen bygger altså på en forventning om at bruken av arbeiderklasse- og regionale uttaletrekk vil ha økt i det britiske samfunnet i denne perioden, og oppgavens spesifikke mål er da å se om dette reflekteres i britisk film.

Oppgaven tar for seg åtte filmer, fordelt på to regioner. Fire av filmene foregår i London, mens de fire andre foregår i Nord-England. Innenfor de respektive regionene er to filmer fra 1960-tallet og to filmer fra 2000-tallet. Ved å samle inn data med både temporal og regional vinkling, ble det mulig å spore eventuelle endringer i bruksfrekvensen av ikke-standard uttale, slik hypotesen setter fokus på. Samtidig tilrettela valget av to regioner for en bredere validitet i dataene.

Det konkluderes i oppgaven med at hypotesen, på sitt mest direkte spørsmål, støttes; det ble funnet en høyere andel ikke-standard uttale i de nye filmene, sett i forhold til de gamle. Men inngående analyse av dataene avslører også at hypotesen ikke støttes for London-filmene, isolert sett; her er det en større andel ikke-standard uttale i de gamle filmene. For filmene som representerer Nord-England, derimot, støttes hypotesen.

Oppgaven har følgende oppbygning: Kapittel 1 introduserer mål og motivasjon med oppgaven, tidligere studier innen området, hvilke filmer og variabler som undersøkes, språkholdninger, definisjon av ”working-class hero”, og arbeiderklassen i britisk film. Kapittel 2 presenterer hovedfigurene i hver film, samt hver enkelt films plott. Kapittel 3 tar for seg materiale og metode. Her presenteres materiale, regionale aksenter, variabler og tilhørende varianter, sentrale lingvistiske definisjoner, og hvordan dataene er behandlet. Kapittel 4 inneholder analyser og resultater. Her analyseres filmene enkeltvis og gruppevis, og på tvers av både tid og region. Dataene presenteres oversiktlig i flere tabeller, med påfølgende kommentarer, og deretter en avsluttende diskusjon. Kapittel 5 konkluderer oppgaven. Her oppsummeres resultatene, og eventuelle konsekvenser som sentrale valg innen metode kan ha hatt for oppgaven, diskuteres. Det følger også et avsnitt som argumenterer for hvilket bidrag oppgaven gjør til lingvistikstudiet, mens det avsluttes med noen tanker om mulige fremtidige studier relatert til oppgavens problemstilling.

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And for possessing the power to always deliver a feeling of mastery when needed, I give a nod to my numerous Nintendo consoles.

*Dedicated to the memory of
The King of Pop
Michael Jackson*



1958 – 2009

*For all the great experiences he gave me through concerts of his that I
attended, for making me discover the joys of dance, and for his musical
heritage that will forever be a source of joy in my life.*

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1 INTRODUCTION

Alfie: “You can’t learn him to talk nice, can you? Not like this rich woman could, can you, eh?”

Gilda: “I can if I try hard.”

Alfie: “Not proper, you can’t. Before he can talk proper, he’ll be ‘bleeding’ this and ‘bleeding’ that and perhaps worse.”

Gilda: “I won’t let him.”

Alfie (1966)

1.1 Aim and Scope

This thesis aims to study how working-class accent has been portrayed in British film during two specific time periods. It hypothesises that the “working-class hero” of 1960s British films will have fewer regional features in his accent, while the working-class hero of British films from the 2000s will possess more regional features. The aspect of interest, then, is whether the working-class hero is actually speaking with a working-class accent in the films. Does, for example, the working-class hero of 1960s films speak an authentic regional accent according to his social and geographical background, or is his accent modified towards a standard form of accent? While considering that society's attitudes towards accents might be reflected in film, it is also worth noting that films of old reflect how educated actors spoke, and not necessarily how people in general spoke. English film director Terence Davies stated in an interview that *A Taste of Honey* (1961) was the first film to feature Northern English accents, attributing it to British actors not wanting to do Northern accents in case their fans would think that was how they spoke for real (Dixon 1994: 252).

It is true that Northern English had not yet acquired a status as being fashionable in 1960, with *Coronation Street* actors being brought in from London, but early on in that decade its popularity soon rose. The new vogue made it desirable to be working class, young and urban, even to be a Northerner. The UK breakthrough of The Beatles in 1962 was one factor that increased the popularity of Scouse and Northern English, with the group singing less with the American accent commonly used among rock vocalists, and more with their own Scouse accent (Wales 2006:).

The hypothesis upon which this dissertation is based grows out of the historical fact that regional accents were less accepted in certain media genres in England in earlier years than they are now (see section 1.7). Notably, during the early period of the BBC, regional

accents would feature primarily as an element of entertainment and characterisation in humour-centric productions, where certain stereotypes were likely to be promoted. RP would be used for matters concerned with the intellectual and the serious (Mugglestone 2003: 269). According to Quirk (1982: 5-6), the relation between regional accents and comedy has a long tradition in Britain, dating back to the days of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens. Conversely, some drama and other productions considered to be “serious” would not feature regional accents. Since the drama genre does not put primary focus on humour, regional accents are less likely to be used for humorous effect in drama productions. It is therefore necessary that the films used in the present work are commonly accepted as belonging to the drama genre of film. Although elements of other genres occur in some of the productions, drama is still the dominating form.

Focusing on the portrayal of English working-class characters, or heroes, in British film, I will analyse a selection of British films from two time periods and from two geographical regions. The periods are the 1960s and the 2000s. The regions are London and Northern England.

Ever since silent film came into existence towards the end of the 19th century, the film medium has been able to provide not only valuable insights into the history and culture of its day but, as talkies became a possibility late in the 1920s, also to provide valuable linguistic data. Languages change over time, and films, just as much as any other recording where speech is contained, such as in radio broadcasts, may provide us with an understanding of how people have spoken their language throughout various periods, and changes described in literature on linguistics may be compared to speech caught on film.

Speech can be an indicator of social class and, although the films of yesteryear can give us insight on how people may have spoken in their everyday life, the present thesis is based on an assumption that speech has been used in film as an artistic tool for imbuing on-screen characters with certain qualities, much in similar manner to how clothing, locales, lighting, and so on have been used to create the film's universe. The thesis explores the possibility that speech, as portrayed in film, has been affected by societal norms that have dictated which accents were considered appropriate for audiovisual or cinematic distribution.

In later years we have seen an increasingly inclusive policy towards regional speech. The BBC was, in earlier times, reluctant towards allowing non-RP speakers to act as newsreaders in their televised news programmes. Today, several of the company's newsreaders can be found to speak with a regional accent (Hannisdal 2007: 22).

Analysing data from the selection of British films, it is hoped that the results will be fruitful, whether they support the hypothesis or not.

1.2 Previous studies

A number of studies exploring language and television/cinema have been carried out previously. Cooke (2005) studied Granada Television and BBC English Regions Drama, two of a number of providers of British television drama in the 1960s and 1970s. Granada had its roots in the Lancashire area, providing Northern England with regional programming. The soap opera *Coronation Street* stands as one of their crowning achievements, having its initial run in 1960 and still being produced as of this writing. Cooke (2005: 146) states that the success of *Coronation Street* was not only because of its focus on working-class community, but also the portrayal of accents and attitudes that were recognisably regional.

Hannisdal (2007) investigated six phonological variables in RP, considering RP to be an accent that changes over time, just as any other accent does. She used RP-speaking newsreaders from three British news channels as a corpus, while factoring in the formality and style connected with the newsreader's communication with the audience, so as not to make generalisations about the RP-speaking group as a whole.

Some investigations into how television may affect people's speech have recently been made. Stuart-Smith (2006: 36) found, in her investigation of television's role in accent change in Modern Urban Scots, statistical evidence that TH-fronting is entering the local accent, partly by way of speakers watching the London-based television drama *EastEnders*. Notably, though, television is only one of several important influences, and Stuart-Smith concludes, in part, that adolescent Scots are using locally situated resources, as well as non-local ones, in inventing a local vernacular (2006: 43). Television may be one of these.

A related study was published the following year, by Stuart-Smith, Timmins, Price and Gunter (2007), where the authors looked at the Glaswegian vernacular. Their research question considered the effect of television on the spread of L-vocalisation in the local vernacular. Results similar to those in the 2006 TH-fronting investigation were found.

Analysing Media Cockney, Stuart-Smith and Timmins (2004) look at a London accent as it is portrayed in a selection of popular television series. Among their research aims is a wish to consult available data on London and South East English accents to see how Media Cockney relates to real-life accents. Reporting on a police drama (*The Bill*), a comedy (*Only*

Fools and Horses) and a soap (*EastEnders*), they find that expected features of Cockney appear, but with variation between the different genres. The comedy show is found to profess a stylised, traditional Cockney, while the drama show and the soap have features more characteristic of mainstream South East English.

In her paper “Dialect and dialectic in a British War Film”, Marriot (1997) used the 1942 film *In Which We Serve* as a basis for arguing that the hierarchical construct of social organisation in the film is realised to a considerable degree through the use of a number of sociolectal varieties. She found the language of upper-middle-class characters to feature standard forms, and “high forms of language” like elaborate syntax and careful articulation (1997: 182). Lower classes she found to have a lack of such features, instead using non-standard forms, such as T Glottalling, H Dropping and [n] rather than /ŋ/ in progressive verb forms (1997: 178).

Most closely resembled to the present thesis, is the work done by Edensor (2008). She performed a study of the South Yorkshire accent and its development between 1969 and 2001, using films by director Kenneth Loach. Loach uses local amateurs in his productions, suggesting they use their local accent, while being restrictive on handing them a script. Edensor thus found Loach’s films to exhibit a natural form of speech from the characters, through half-scripted, half-improvised performances.

1.3 Standard vs. non-standard accents

The present work is built around the observation that certain accents enjoy high social status, while certain other accents have low social status. Non-regional accents, such as RP, are considered to be high-status. In this work, high-status accents are defined as standard. Regional and working-class accents are considered to be low-status. Low-status accents are defined as non-standard.

Since this thesis argues in favour of there existing significant importance in the relation between standard and non-standard accents, it supports Wells’ (1982: 34) definition of a standard accent as

one which, at a given time and place, is generally considered correct: it is held up as a model of how one ought to speak, it is encouraged in the classroom, it is widely regarded as the most desirable accent for a person in a high-status profession to have.

He also notes that RP benefits from these ideals (ibid.).

This thesis categorises variants into standard and non-standard, and RP pronunciation has been used as the reference point for standard varieties. Non-standard pronunciation is represented by regional and working-class varieties found in London and Northern England.

1.4 Variables

For the two regions that have been picked for the present analysis, three linguistic variables from each region will be analysed. Since British film making has found its natural centre to reside in the country's capitol, a plethora of films have also had their story set here. This thesis will therefore be able to analyse the representation of the London accent known as Cockney, in film. The variables to be studied here are H Dropping, T Reduction and Diphthong Shift, all typical features of Cockney. For the Diphthong Shift, there is an exclusive focus on FACE words.

While a good number of films have been set in Northern England, it has not been possible to obtain films that have their stories set within the same city or local area across the chosen time periods. A focus has therefore been put on features generally found in Northern England accents. The three selected features are FACE Monophthongisation, GOAT Monophthongisation, and Unsplit PUT-CUT. See section 3.3 for a full presentation of the variables.

1.5 Films studied

The films that are used in this study fulfil a number of prerequisites, in order to be as comparable as possible. The topic under scrutiny is how working-class accents have been portrayed in British film over a period of some 40 years, and so their stories must revolve around a character with a working-class background. There are additional factors that are common across the films. The characters are all male, and most are young adults. Since I am also considering the portrayal of accent by region, the films are set in two specific regions across the two time periods. The regions selected are that of London, with special interest in the Cockney accent, and that of Northern England. Although a healthy selection of 1960s dramas about working-class people in Northern England were produced, as part of the

“British New Wave” (see section 1.9), few films of the same type that were set in London were produced. As such, finding films that correspond on all factors has been a challenge.

For 1960s London, *Sparrows Can't Sing* (1963) and *Alfie* (1966) have been chosen, while for 2000s London, *Snatch* (2000) and *All or Nothing* (2002) were picked.

For Northern England, *A Kind of Loving* (1962) and *This Sporting Life* (1963) were selected for the early period, while *The Full Monty* (1997) and *Billy Elliot* (2000) will represent recent productions.

1.6 Why study pronunciation in British film?

The use of motion pictures as material and source of speech data has two aspects. One is my interest in film as entertainment, through their thought-provoking qualities, their power to trigger a vast range of emotions in the viewer, and as a topic for conversation and socialisation among friends. The other is my interest in phonology and phonetics, and the related deep studies of these sciences at the University. When combining these interests in order to produce this Master's thesis, turning to film seemed natural.

In many ways, films can be considered cultural and historical documents. They may convey beliefs and dreams popular at the time of production. They may also inform us about human behaviour, e.g. through documentaries. Films may bring joy, sadness, awareness, anger, indifference, and a whole sleuth of other feelings to the viewer. The audiovisual power and importance of film are easily appreciated when viewing moving images from war torn areas during World War II. A more recent example is the Gulf War of 1990-1991, a war which one could follow daily on the news, even witnessing live broadcasts on unfolding military actions.

For the present study, the field of interest is speech in film. Accent and dialect are features of speech that may inform us on various characteristics of a person. We may be able to tell where a person grew up, what class the person may belong to, what place in society the person aspires towards, and level of education. How you speak is intrinsically connected to how other people categorise you, and to how you present yourself.

More specifically, this paper concerns itself with how the speech of the working classes of England has been portrayed in British film. The United Kingdom has a long legacy of distinguishing social classes in its society. Pronunciation is one tool used for making such categorisations. There is evidence that one's way of speaking has become a less important

tool in making social class distinctions in England, with, to name an earlier example, the BBC in recent times having hired non-RP speakers as newsreaders.

The reason for conducting a study of regional accents in British film is to see whether working-class characters in leading roles speak an accent that would be appropriate to the background given them through the film script. The underlying hypothesis argues that, while regional features in speech were less accepted in earlier film-making, they have been increasingly prominent in recent productions. Given that regional accents may not have been readily promoted in films of the 1960s, we may find a standardised accent in its place.

It may be worth noting that there are bound to be differences between the natural speech of real life conversations and scripted speech in film. It is likely that the latter will lack certain characteristics that are naturally present in everyday speech interaction. Wray and Bloomer (2006: 87-87) suggest that features we find to be natural components of real life conversation are not present in a script. They further note that a script is dependent on an external audience being able to put it into context before they can appreciate a scripted conversation. Lastly, scripted speech neglects the spontaneity of natural speech. Scripted conversations have been rehearsed and the actors know what to say and when to say it, which leaves little room for spontaneity. Nevertheless, some directors approach scripting in a manner that allows actors to perform more spontaneously.

These observations should not pose any problems for the present thesis, since its interest lies in accent being utilised as an artistic device in film. In fact, the scripted nature of film dialogue might prove beneficial in relation to the aim of this study. This is because accent can be an integral feature of scripted speech, and thus one of many artistic devices that may be employed in character portrayal. However, it should be of interest to note that the drama genre, which the films herein studied adhere to, aims towards high authenticity in the matters it presents (Dirks, "Drama Films", Filmsite). Accent should be a natural part of that strive for authenticity.

1.7 *Attitudes towards language*

It seems that, in some way or another, we all speak in an utterly horrible manner. Those who have a keen sense of what constitutes passable language, are quick to judge other people, based on their, apparently, atrocious verbal utterings. More to the point, all of us have a strong

sense of language use, and categorise it into what we conceive as good and bad variants, and the speakers of these variants are labelled thereafter.

Some parents may have found themselves raising their eyebrows disapprovingly to certain verbalisations from the mouths of their own offspring. Older generations can easily think that young people of today possess a language of lessened decency. Conversely, young people can feel that older generations speak an antiquated and distanced tongue rendered increasingly unintelligible to today's youth. In other words, things are exactly as they have always been. Language is like an organic being; it changes over time, adjusting itself to its surroundings. It becomes an effective tool of communication in hundreds, even thousands, of linguistic sub-groups, being made into a specialised variant that fills the needs of its targeted group of speakers. It is inclusive and exclusive at the same time. Slang, pronunciation, use of accents, dialectal features and tonal patterns are some of the linguistic indicators that bind together a group of speakers who identify themselves with some common thing. Language, then, is inextricably tied to how people understand themselves, where they want to situate themselves, and, of course, what groups they do not want to be associated with. In short, language is an important part of our identity, and is extensively manipulated by individuals and groups in order to create that identity.

Giles and Powesland (1975: 10) cite a study that discusses why some dialects gain superiority over others. Two hypotheses are given: One suggests that a dialect becomes superior because of some "inherent value". The other suggests that superiority is granted through a so-called "imposed norm". When a dialect is preferred over other varieties of a language because it is considered the aesthetically more pleasing alternative, then that preference finds support in the argument of inherent value. The inherent value argument seems to suggest that non-standard varieties of a particular language are less capable of expression and more riddled with irregularities.

The other view, imposed norm, argues that a certain dialect receives its superiority through being used by high-status speakers and institutions. A good example is Received Pronunciation, originally a Southern English dialect which eventually became the national norm for "educated" speech in England through widespread use in trade and politics, and through use in the country's governmental institutions, which happened to be located in London. It may be valid to state that an imposed norm does not necessarily imply that other dialects are linguistically inferior, but rather, that they are merely a different variety of that language. As such, all varieties are considered to have an equal richness of expression, but

because of some cultural development, one dialect in a given language has attained its status as being the standard variety (Giles and Powesland 1975: 11-13).

The belief that a dialect may be deemed superior over other dialects because of some inherent value or aesthetic beauty has been challenged by numerous studies. Giles and Billings (2004: 191) refer to studies where speech judges who are exposed to dialects unfamiliar to them, e.g. from foreign languages, are unable to recognise and categorise class-related varieties on aesthetic grounds, even though these varieties are classified as such within the speech community where they are spoken. This would suggest that the argument of inherent value and aesthetic beauty may be overshadowed by the imposed norm argument, where a variety is preferred because its speakers are high-status, as is proposed by Trudgill and Giles (1978; in Giles and Billings 2004:191).

What inevitably follows when one variety of a language becomes the standard is that all other varieties are categorised as non-standard. Standardisation thus causes other varieties within a language group to be marginalised. Writing about Northern English, Wales (2006:94) argues that the development of a standard variety has had detrimental effects on regional varieties, marginalising them over the past 200 years or more.

Now I will briefly discuss some studies that have specifically investigated listeners' reactions to standard vs. non-standard accents of English.

While the primary function of speech may be that of verbal communication as a means for conscious information sharing, several studies suggest that listeners receive more than just referential information that is intentionally distributed by the speaker. One's manner of speech may also be understood as indicating certain personal and social characteristics in the speaker (Cargile and Giles 1997: 195). Since it is the purpose of this thesis to investigate whether certain accents are subject to social marginalisation in a selection of British films, it feels natural to mention that one of the central beliefs in the study of language attitudes is that socially marginalised accents evoke negative feelings in a non-marginalised listener (ibid.). However, studies have arrived at various conclusions concerning this position. Investigating whether speakers of regionally stigmatised Mexican accents would have their job opportunities reduced because of their accent, De la Zerda and Hopper (1979) recorded sessions with employment interviewers in large businesses in San Antonio, Texas, as they handled applicants with various degrees of Mexican accents, in a continuum ranging from standard accents to non-standard accents. The authors found that speakers with the most standard-sounding accents were most often considered for job positions as a supervisor, while the importance of accent decreased for applicants applying for job positions as skilled

technicians and semi-skilled workers. In another study, Giles et al (1995) rather found that Anglo-American listeners did not experience a negative mood when listening to Hispanic-accented speakers, even though the latter group's accent is generally considered to be less prestigious than standard accents of American English (Cargile and Giles 1997: 196). These studies suggest that non-standard accents are not always disfavoured. The findings are admittedly not directly transferable to British circumstances, as they concern themselves primarily with American accents of speakers whose mother tongue is not English. In general, though, the focus is on standard vs. non-standard accents, and such studies may still provide the reader with some interesting perspectives.

In another study, Choy and Dodd (1976) looked at children where one group spoke Standard English and another group spoke non-standard Hawaiian English, in particular they investigated the level of comprehension the children had of their own and each other's dialects. The authors found that each group had a better understanding of stories told in their own accent, than stories told in another accent. An additional aspect to their study was what teachers expected of these children as pupils, and how they evaluated their performance. They found that the teachers regularly had weaker expectations for the non-standard Hawaiian English speaking children. This may suggest a pattern where academic success is more available to speakers of Standard English, regardless of actual intellectual abilities in children across all accents of English. Discrimination of speakers because of their accents is not limited to school children, however. A study of interviewers' assessment of job applicants seems to reveal a pattern where applicants are often accepted or declined because of some personal characteristic unrelated to their qualifications for the job. Put simply, a speaker with a non-standard accent can experience that a standard accent speaker may be given a job they both applied for, even though their qualifications otherwise were similar. This seems especially true for leadership occupation, but less so for manual labour (Giles and Powesland 1975: 105-106). Extra worthy of note, perhaps, is the study performed by Dixon, Mahoney and Cocks (2002). Their aim was to investigate the relation between accent and attribution of guilt. They found that suspects speaking with a Birmingham accent were considered guiltier than speakers of standard accents. One might conclude from this that, all other factors being equal, a speaker's accent can provide serious repercussions or advantageous privileges, depending on where in the continuum between standard and non-standard the accent may be located.

Britain, perhaps more so than many other countries, is a nation where linguistic indicators have had a thorough impact on society and its groups. Britain has a long history of

class consciousness, and one's manner of speech has been inherently connected to one's class background. Through traditional mind-sets, people in the British Isles have been categorised into classes based on how they speak. While linguistic features may indicate regional background, as is possible in great detail in a country such as Norway where attitudes towards accents today seem inclusive, yet, at the same time, conservative in maintaining regional idiosyncrasies, there is, additionally, in England a noticeable focus on accents and dialects as indicators of social class. While some linguistic features are considered indicative of working-class speech, others are considered indicative of middle-class speech, and variants within middle-class speech are sometimes also recognised. Britain is one among several countries that have a spoken standard towards which many class-conscious or higher-class speakers strive. Often, it is known as Received Pronunciation or RP for short. Some colloquial names are BBC English, Queen's English, or Oxford English, and it is telling that these allude to prestigious entities. Indeed, some fifty years ago prestigious varieties were fast becoming the vessel with which social advancement and mobility could be gained in Great Britain (Wales 2006: 145). The English language is ridden with prestigious forms, so it is no wonder that accent is closely related to class in England.

BBC newsreaders have traditionally been RP speakers, but less so in recent years. The impact of its national broadcasts over the years cannot have been without some effect on how RP has positioned itself. The BBC hired their newsreaders from higher education institutions such as universities, and, being RP speakers, they contributed to the nationally televised distribution of the standard accent. The BBC argued that the intelligibility of RP was much higher among British people, than any regional varieties were, and so the spread of RP eventually warranted one of its everyday names; BBC English (Wales 2006: 145). RP is the only non-regional accent in Britain. As such, it does not inform the listener where in Britain the speaker is from. Rather, RP is indicative of the speaker having a privileged educational and economical status. This is because RP is prestigious in milieus of higher education and among those that are economically well off. Likewise, accents of lower classes are prestigious as well, albeit within the group in which they are spoken, a phenomenon that may be labelled "covert prestige". In such cases, accent and dialect can function as a unifying code of speech, a tool which strengthens the interrelationships of its speakers and creates a rigid distinction between "us" and "them". Regional, and perhaps especially Northern, accents and dialects reached a wider audience once *Coronation Street* debuted in 1960, and the popularity of Scouse, in particular, grew notably when The Beatles burst into the scene two years later (Wales 2006: 162). While studies suggest that speakers of standard accents are believed to be

more intelligent and competent, non-standard speakers are imagined to be socially more attractive and to have their personal integrity on a higher level than RP speakers (Giles and Powesland 1975: 67-68). Wales (2006: 166) cites studies where Scouse and Cockney did not receive high scores concerning popularity. Wales maintains, however, that Scouse and Northern accents are perceived as being representative of friendliness, and many companies now have their call centres placed in Northern regions, believing customer services will benefit from the positive images that the region's accents conjure.

The view that most linguists adopt is that there is nothing inherently bad about any variety of language a person speaks. Linguistically, no speech form is uglier or prettier than another; they are merely different. Whether or not a Briton pronounces [h] in *house* or [l] in *milk*, these are not objectively identifiable entities that are inherently ugly or pretty in a person's speech. Such discrimination arises from socially constructed beliefs about what constitutes "good" and "bad" language and is one of the pillars that help uphold class distinctions.

While people in real life are unavoidably categorised on the basis of their pronunciation, how are accents then utilised in fiction? A character in a fictional work is a carefully thought-out product of its creator, and accent is just one of many traits which a writer, director or other creative force uses to form a character. Surveys have shown that accent has been used in film to provoke connotations that the viewer supposedly has towards certain accents and dialect features, and thus there is a play on stereotypes that connect a manner of speech with certain traits in individuals or groups of people. Lippi-Green (1997: 101) found, for Walt Disney Pictures' animated features, that heroes use socially mainstream English, while characters of ill intent or motivation are given a regional or socially stigmatised variant of English. She also found that

those characters who have the widest variety of life choices and possibilities available to them are male, and they are speakers of MUSE [mainstream US English] or a non-stigmatized variety of British English. These characters may be heroes or villains, human or animal, attractive or unattractive. For females, on the other hand, and for those who mark their alliance to other cultures and places in terms of language, the world is demonstrably a smaller place. The more "negatives" a character has to deal with (gender, color, stigmatized language, less favorable national origin) the smaller the world (ibid.).

Other well-known examples would be foreign accents for English-speaking characters who do not have English as their mother tongue (although they may be portrayed by an actor whose

mother tongue is English), and African American Vernacular English for the portrayal of certain groups of African-American characters, as seen in the television series *The Wire*. The examples mentioned may help in increasing the believability of some character portrayals.

As a tool for comedy, accent and dialect are widely applied. When actor Bela Lugosi starred in *Dracula* (1931), his heavy Hungarian accent might not have been a comedic element at the time, but his trill /r/ in dialogue such as “I never drink... wine”, as when Dracula explains his drinking habits to his guest Jonathan Harker (with the audience surely understanding what he does indeed drink), later became not only a characteristic speech feature of the Dracula character in general, but of most vampire portrayals in film, now often appearing as a comedic element.

In comedy, accent and dialect are often parodied, meaning they are to some degree “overdone”. Playing on stereotypes known to the public, parody is meant to infuse humour into characters. For stereotypes known on a national level, such as regional characters, their speech features are not always faithfully recreated, but extremified to some degree, so that the portrayal turns into comedy. It is for this reason that drama has been the preferred genre when selecting films for this dissertation, because drama is believed to promote less stereotyped characters.

Since accent can be used with such efficiency in creating character, it seems obvious that speech is indeed among the most successful tools in media for creating on-screen personas. It is not so strange to observe how accent is used as characterisation in media, when studies of accent attitudes in real life show a tendency for listeners to adhere personality traits to a speaker, based solely on the speaker’s accent. Giles and Powesland (1975: 68) cite a study where speakers of RP, South Welsh and Somerset accents read a neutral passage of prose, with listeners from the two latter regions passing judgement on the speakers after their performance. The regional speakers were categorised as being good-natured, humorous, talkative and, as mentioned earlier, as having favourable amounts of social attractiveness and personal integrity. Conversely, the RP speakers were seen as being more industrious, intelligent and self-confident, with higher ambitions and greater determination. In social interaction, social identity is an important factor in how a person is viewed and, furthermore, accent is central in determining how a listener and a speaker will interact (Cargile and Giles 1997: 197).

Accent no doubt provokes a variety of feelings in a listener. If we consider Cockney, Matthews wrote in 1938 (1972 [1938]: xi-xii) that it is “the most generally despised and downtrodden” variety of non-standard English, further claiming that philologists view

Cockney as “a vulgar speech based upon error and misunderstanding”, showing no willingness to grant it status as a dialect. While most linguists today would support his protest against labelling Cockney as “thieves’ slang” with uncharacteristic pronunciation (Matthews 1972: xiii-xiv), he may nevertheless have been right, at least in his time, when emphasising the incompatibility between the Cockney dialect and occupational and social advancement (Matthews 1972: xiv).

Trudgill (2000: 13) acknowledges that the glottal stop [ʔ] has risen from its former status as a speech feature of lower classes to occurring in middle and upper classes.

Wells (1998-2000) agrees with Trudgill, dating the increasing trend of T Glottalling and L Vocalisation in young people’s speech to the last 30 years (1968-1998). Wells notes that working-class speech features are enjoying a wider acceptance among speakers, and that RP is losing some of its prestige as a standard form of pronunciation. He adds that the recent influx of newsreaders with regional accents working with the BBC is indicative of changes in society. Wells stresses that these changes are particularly evident in the current availability of good secondary and higher education for all regardless of social class. For training foreign students in English, Wells suggests that the traditional model of RP is retained, however in a modernised form. As such, he suggests “allowing/encouraging glottal stop for /t/ in preconsonantal environments and so on”, but also to “be ready to accept a glottal stop for /t/ in many syllable-final environments, and [o] in place of dark /ɪ/” (Wells 1998-2000).

During Shakespeare’s time people’s opportunities in life were evidently not affected by their accent, so that some found themselves obtaining the highest positions available in their society, regardless of their regional speech (Crystal 2004: 3). One example mentioned by Crystal is Sir Walter Raleigh (c. 1552 – 1618) who, it is said, spoke an unadulterated Devonshire accent his whole life.

In time, regional and working-class speech in Britain would become objects of stigmatisation. However, features that became stigmatised have recently experienced a wider acceptance among speakers of higher social classes, as well as being uttered by the higher-social-class speakers themselves. RP itself started mixing with regional accents from the 1960s onwards, giving us varieties known as “modified RP” (Crystal 2004: 3-4).

The decline in stigmatisation of regional and working-class speech may be attributable to social changes in British society and, particularly of interest here, post-war changes. Following the Labour Party’s 1945 election success, the post-war establishment of the British

Welfare State, together with the policy of full employment, led to the nation's poorest now experiencing increased purchasing power as a result of higher wages.

Bédarida (1991) explains that the years 1953-1954 ushered in what would be known as “the affluent society” in Britain, and the introduction of welfare programmes that secured sufficient wages and work for all helped reduce the differences in income that had previously been present between low earners and high earners. Still, egalitarian ideas, which had been present for some time, were not as successful in their dispersion as they faced strong forces working towards maintaining a strict class structure in British society, albeit with “subtler and less obvious devices” (Bédarida 1991: 224).

As the post-war period progressed, the British society was to experience profound changes. Wotschke (1996) writes that educational opportunities increased for members of the lower classes, as the post-war economy was dependent on people with high qualifications. Academic careers became a possibility for more people than before, as the New Universities of the 1960s accompanied the growth of already established educational institutions. This, in turn, made prestige language forms both more accessible and desirable to the lower classes. The modified accents that developed often had mild traces of regional features, which were well accepted by the 1970s. At the same time as non-RP speakers entered arenas from which they were previously excluded, modifying their accents towards a prestige accent in the process, an increasingly larger group of educated speakers drew pride from retaining their regional accent, and would mark their regional identity and geographical membership this way. In the 1960s and 1970s there were tendencies among some speakers of high education to reject RP. Wotschke (ibid.) further writes that the social divide between prestige accents and regional accents has weakened, so that “careful speech” among young students is increasingly becoming a rarity. The growing accessibility of education in this period is a sign of both increased democratisation and of less rigid class divisions in the British post-war society.

From there existing no stigmatisation of dialects 400 years ago, to increasingly salient beliefs about inherent connections between accent features and social class during the eighteenth century, to RP mixing with regional features from the 1960s onwards (by some labelled Estuary English), stigmatisation of regional and lower-class accents seems to be declining in sync with their spreading across social classes.

1.8 Defining the Working-Class Hero

A hero may be seen as the principal character in a film. A hero may possess admirable qualities, have success in his or her endeavours, may fight for what is right, and be to most people's liking.

There are several sub-types of the hero. Not only do heroes occur in various social strata, they are also culturally defined. Generally speaking, films have portrayed historical heroes, cultural heroes, local heroes, antiheroes, literary heroes, outsider heroes, and heroes of various classes (Brooke, "The British Hero", BFI ScreenOnline). For the purposes of this dissertation, only one of a number of British concepts of the hero will be considered; the *Working-Class Hero*.

To produce comparable data, the sources used must fall within a given definition. *Working-Class Hero* will refer to lead characters who aspire for something better, while still being true to their class origins, and who create sympathy in the viewer.

It is well known that languages change over time. Just from one generation to another there are differences, and parents may speak somewhat differently compared to the speech of their children. Thus, it is not unlikely that some variation will be found in the material consulted here, which stretches over a period of about 40 years. Regardless, it is not the actors' own accents that will be of concern, but rather the accents that the actors produce for the characters they portray. Thus, it is *the accents of the fictional film characters* that are of importance. These accents, and the portrayal of them at the time of a film's release, are believed to be more the product of the film director's vision and, according to the underlying hypothesis of this paper, a product of social judgement and beliefs about the prestige surrounding accents.

As was mentioned earlier, the common denominator for all the material used is a focus on working-class societies, where at least one of the characters has a prominent role. All characters will be of the same gender and roughly the same age across the two time periods. The material must exhibit comparable social and geographical backgrounds between the two time periods. Also, all the films fit into the drama genre.

1.9 The working class in British film

As early as in the 1930s, British film would focus on social problems and the working man's life, investigating hardships he went through. As World War II came to an end, the social

problem film, which strived towards creating authentic characters and plots by making protagonists out of ordinary characters and putting plots in natural locations (Landy 1991: 436), regained popularity in British film making. It is probable that this focus on authenticity also paved the way for using accents that were considered appropriate to the characters' social background. Although themes such as exploitation of workers, poverty and other factors likely to affect working-class people were approached in 1930s film, the representation was not necessarily that of realism. Instead, films were melodramatic and plots polarised. Characters' emotional reactions were emphasised over social issues and, often, one man alone was enough to overcome problems on behalf of the whole community. Still, these were social problem films, representing a genre that, more often than other genres, would feature working-class characters both in leading and in marginalised roles (Landy 1991: 432-433).

Considering the portrayal of the working class in British film during World War II, Rattigan (1994a: 85) gives an example from *The Demi-Paradise* (1943), where "the working class is portrayed within the stereotyped roles and narrative and thematic functions inherited from prewar British cinema: as comic relief or comic sounding boards for the dominant ideology". Rattigan does state, however, that the film could be considered a comedy, and it was expected that the audience would be entertained by its portrayal of both lower and upper classes.

Marwick (1982, in Rattigan 1994b: 146) explains that the working class gained not only a stronger sense of self-awareness and solidarity, but more attention from the middle and upper classes, as well, because of their great efforts during the war. The middle and upper classes did not want the working class returning to the poverty they experienced prior to World War II. While the working class enjoyed a sense of growing importance in post-war Britain, this was not instantly reflected in film, according to Rattigan (ibid.). He notes that what did occur during the first years after the war, was that the working class experienced some incorporation into narratives and received sympathetic characterisations, but not much more (ibid.).

Brooke ("Social Problem Films", BFI, ScreenOnline) allocates the social problem film to a time period extending from the end of World War II to the beginning of the 1960s. He notes that this genre put equal amounts of focus on the film's subject, as it put on its characters and plot. Tales of morality, he notes, were told through individual human dramas, in a genre that found some of its inspiration in crime thrillers and melodramas. The post-war interest in describing social problems through film peaked in the years 1956-63 (Hill 1986: 67), which is known as the New Wave period.

As part of the New Wave in British cinema, the acts of shooting on location and hiring unknown locals to star in the productions ushered in the industrial working class as a new theme in British film making, a social class that had, up until then, seen little of itself on the silver screen (Hill 1986: 127). New Wave itself was at its peak in the years 1959-1963, and the films of this period are also known as “kitchen sink dramas” (Hutchings 2001: 146).

The term “kitchen sink” came as a result of the films telling stories of everyday dramas (Wickman, “British New Wave”, BFI ScreenOnline). New Wave grew out of “The Movement” and “Free Cinema”, the former coming to life in the early to mid-fifties as a literary circle; the latter a documentary film initiative flourishing from mid to late 1950s. New Wave found inspiration in Free Cinema’s focus on England’s working classes (Lowenstein 2001: 225).

Often a theme in New Wave films, upward social mobility manifests itself in protagonists inching their way up from working-class or lower middle-class origins towards an upper middle-class environment. This may take the form of courting, even marrying, women of higher social classes. Alternatively, in place of social mobility, the male hero may still have a taste of higher-class life through women who, characteristically of New Wave, may “represent a ‘respectability’ or ‘classiness’ distinct from that of the male hero” (Hill 1986: 157). It might be said that it is the pursuit of higher-class living, not necessarily the company of women, which motivates the male working-class hero (ibid.). This theme is reflected in *Alfie*, and Hill (2001: 251) further notes that the New Wave focus is on the working-class male as an individual, and less on dynamics of community and group.

While the working classes had been portrayed in British film in earlier decades, New Wave approached the subject matter quite differently. New Wave committed itself to the current understanding of realism as a genre, a concept that is arguably context-dependent (see Hill 2001: 250), ushering in its own portrayal of the working classes. As Hill (ibid.) notes, the representation of the working class in film is not necessarily a representation of reality in itself, but is rather tinted by a particular social perspective, together with assumptions on a cultural and political level. Contrary to earlier depictions, which showed the working classes as workers, New Wave presented them as individuals with materialistic needs, and focused on their spare-time activities, rather than their work. Often, the main character in New Wave narratives was the working-class male, detailing his pursuit of social adjustment in a society where identities of class and gender were in upheaval (Hutchings 2001: 146-147). Shafer (2001: 4) refers to this genre as a period where “gritty, realistic dramas took a refreshingly honest look at the people who lived in the grimy industrial communities in the Midlands and

in the North of England”. He goes on to mention that one of the characteristics of these films was realistic dialogue. A few of the films of this period are *A Kind of Loving* and *This Sporting Life*, both of which are used in this thesis.

Another movement that dominated during 1960s film-making in England is dubbed Swinging London. Its protagonists defy “convention as they try to fulfil their ambitions and find romance in a modern and uniquely unconventional London” (Luckett 2001: 233). And while women usually were the lead characters in Swinging London films, men sometimes filled the roles, as well. *Alfie*, with Michael Caine in the lead role, constitutes an example of this.

In the 1980s and the 1990s, working-class life as a topic in British film was rejuvenated, exemplified by films such as *Trainspotting* (1996) and *The Full Monty*. The focus, as in New Wave, was on the individual and his non-work activities (Hallam 2001: 261). However, the manner in which the working class was represented on-screen during the New Wave era was adjusted when it became a recurrent topic in the 1980s and the 1990s. Not only was there a stronger focus on individuality and personal depictions through exposing the lives of the working class in their homes and family; Now, the working class got further removed from its work environment, and a focus on the detrimental effect of the working class' lacklustre economic possibilities was also a part of the topicalisation (Hill 2001: 251). In this time period, the economic hardships of the working class are, in some films, represented through the disintegration of heavy industries (Hill 2001: 251-252). A recent example is *The Full Monty*. In the 1990s there is a shift in focus from production to consumption when portraying working-class life, seen in the already mentioned films *Trainspotting* and *The Full Monty* (Hallam 2001: 261). And, according to Monk (2001: 274), the 1990s ushered forth a number of British films where social marginalisation and unemployment, and the problems therein, were the topic. She notes that the films represented a wide variety of genres and many also appealed to various moviegoers, both mainstream and minority audiences.

British social realism seems to live on even today. Armstrong (“Social Realism”, BFI ScreenOnline) names *The Full Monty* as “[epitomising] a new and entertaining conception of British social realism”, while noting important new films coming out in the year 2002; *Sweet Sixteen* by Ken Loach, *All or Nothing* by Mike Leigh, and *Morvern Callar* by Lynne Ramsay. In Armstrong’s words, these “[suggest] a national cinema with a genuine and vital commitment to the way we live”.

2 PRESENTATION OF FILMS AND MAIN CHARACTERS

Vi: “What's diction?”

Doris: “Well, it's the way you speak. Aitches and things. Talking nicely. Like the announcers on the wires. Why?”

Vi: “Nothing, just wondered.”

It Always Rains on Sunday (1947)

2.1 *Sparrows Can't Sing* (London, 1963)

2.1.1 Plot

Charlie has been out at sea for two years. Upon his return, he finds his old neighbourhood demolished. His wife Maggie is nowhere to be seen. He goes about his old town, reacquainting himself with place and people, inquiring friends and family on the whereabouts of his wife. Maggie, on the other hand, is in courtship with another man, and has a little baby to take care of. In between greeting his mother, quarrelling with his brother, and meeting old friends down at the pub, Charlie visits the local bakery to ask when Maggie will come to work.

Charlie and Maggie do eventually meet. Charlie indicates his still unbridled interest in Maggie, unaware that she is seeing another man. Maggie is reluctant to tell Charlie who the baby's father is, although Charlie eventually believes it is him.

From there on, we follow Charlie as he makes himself noticed around town, trying to regain the love of his wife.

2.1.2 Character

Charlie is a prankster and an attention-seeker. He tells stories of bravery at the pub, re-enacting crucial moments in a strikingly physical manner. He threatens both his brother and the bakery workers in a physical manner as to the whereabouts of Maggie. While he may not be a man of careful afterthought, he is an energetic being that receives a lot of attention in his neighbourhood. After returning from the sea, he wishes to reunite with Maggie and make a home for them. All the while, the location of his old neighbourhood, coupled with the occupations of his brother and mother, indicates that Charlie is a working-class male from London. It is his aspiration to create something better, for himself and his dear, upon his return that qualifies him as fitting in under the term *Working-Class Hero*.

2.2 *Alfie* (London, 1966)

2.2.1 Plot

Alfie is a cab-driving ladies' man. He leads a carefree life, enjoying time with his numerous "birds", as he calls them. He is very clear on what needs women of all kinds have, stating, for example, "Make a married woman laugh and you're halfway there". While, initially, Alfie seems content in providing for his insatiable lust for the opposite sex, it is soon revealed that he is aiming towards settling down. The plot turns from light-hearted comedy to thought-provoking tragedy, as the film asks what actions follow the consequences of a child and a still unborn child, both to whom Alfie is the father.

2.2.2 Character

Alfie is a cab driver and a Cockney. Much of his screen time is spent talking directly to the camera, thus involving the viewer in a direct fashion. Through his numerous encounters with the female sex, and his knowledge and premonitions about their behaviour, it becomes evident that he is an experienced ladies' man. At one point he meets an American woman older than he, with whom he wants to settle down. It is this desire of his that shows a wish to better his own living conditions, creating a calmer and more balanced existence for himself.

2.3 *All or Nothing* (London, 2002)

2.3.1 Plot

All or Nothing takes place over a weekend in a housing estate in London, where we get to meet father Phil, mother Penny, daughter Rachel and son Rory, as they live their family life.

Phil is a taxi driver who strives to make enough money off of his job. Penny works in the check-out counter at the local supermarket, while Rachel is a cleaning lady at a home for elderly people. Rory is unemployed and aggressive. Together they form a family with its fair share of challenges. Phil borrows money from his wife and children, Penny feels emotionally distanced from Phil, Rachel has to cope with demanding co-workers, and Rory is bullied in his neighbourhood.

When Rory suffers a heart attack, the family is reunited, and Phil and Penny rediscover their love for each other.

2.3.2 Character

Phil seems joyless in his daily work. Although he is not earning sufficient amounts of money, he finds it too hard getting up early enough to catch the lucrative morning airport runs. He is an object of little respect in the eyes of his wife and son, and a number of his customers come up with various schemes to avoid paying the fare.

At one point, he has had enough of it, turns off his mobile and drives off. At the same time, Rory suffers his heart attack, and no one can get hold of Phil to tell him the news. After having witnessed his son's recovery, and met his family at the hospital, he and Penny have a fight at home, followed by a moment of affection. The next day, we see Phil freshly shaved and with a look of content. He did an airport run that morning.

As Phil finally manages to change his habit, and does the airport run, it is obvious that he wants to create a better world for both himself and his family. That is why he can be described as a working-class hero.

2.4 *Snatch (London, 2000)*

2.4.1 Plot

Turkish is an unlicensed boxing promoter. He was a happy one until he got mixed into Brick Top's approach to boxing: matches with fixed outcome. Sending his close companion Tommy out to buy a caravan from some Irish Gypsies, tag-along buddy and boxer Gorgeous George is knocked senseless at the hands of Mickey. Turkish must now explain to Brick Top that they have lost their boxer. Turkish suggests, though, that they can use Mickey instead. Brick Top has his own set of plans, though. Mickey must go down in the fourth round.

At the same time, a diamond heist is going down. Dressed as orthodox rabbis, the thieves outsmart the guards and find their way into the vault and steal the diamond. However, somewhere along the way, it gets lost, and a whole slew of colourful character, some completely useless as henchmen, gets involved in the search.

2.4.2 Character

Turkish enjoys his job as an unlicensed boxing promoter. He loves Tommy, but only in a strictly professional way, and he does not shy away from the odd kick in the side on Tommy's part. He runs an arcade and is a rather calm character. The last thing he wants is to owe Brick Top a favour. Unlucky for him, that is exactly what happens.

Making his living in the underworld as a boxing promoter, with offices cramped between the walls of a rather decrepit caravan, Turkish is a crook who would rather not get too involved with demanding criminals. The character of Turkish provokes sympathy in viewer. Although a representative of the criminal underworld, he is a likable character, showing love for his friends and taking care of Tommy. He is also the off-screen narrator throughout the film, and thus stands out as one of the more prominent characters among the film's varied cast.

2.5 *A Kind of Loving (Northern England, 1962)*

2.5.1 Plot

In a Northern England town, Victor Arthur "Vic" Brown becomes infatuated with a girl from work. Ingrid, the girl, is flattered by his courting, and they soon start dating. It is soon revealed that their infatuation produces undesirable consequences. Ingrid becomes pregnant, Vic realises he does not love her, and the existence of the unborn child forces them into wedlock. Vic must now cope with Ingrid's mother, who does not approve of him, and his own mother, who has little accept for his actions. Married, but not in love, Vic and Ingrid must try and create a future together.

2.5.2 Character

Vic comes from a working-class background, his father an engine driver. He is a popular fellow at work, where he is employed as a draughtsman. While his family are traditional working-class people, Vic himself has obtained a white-collar job. In a conversation with his father, he expresses a desire to travel and see the world, at the same time agreeing with his father's presumption that there must be lots of opportunities in Vic's line of work.

While his infatuation with Ingrid was no more than corporeal yearning, the marriage comes about as a result of pregnancy and a need to save face and adhere to expectations of society.

The realisation that Vic rises above his working-class background through his white-collar job, and his admittance that he must now provide Ingrid and the forthcoming baby with a good life and a safe home, makes him a good candidate for the role as a working-class hero.

2.6 *This Sporting Life (Northern England, 1963)*

2.6.1 Plot

Frank Machin is a rugby player. He lodges with Mrs. Hammond. Expecting to advance in his career, he suggests that Mrs. Hammond charges more rent. His determination, impressive physique and prowess on the rugby field, help him land a lucrative contract. Success is not all good to Frank, however, and his behaviour soon grows into increasingly disturbing proportions. Frank is overcome with a sense of brutality, affecting Mrs. Hammond and others around him. Similarly, his newly acquired fame triggers his vanity. People close to him become alienated, while Frank struggles to come to grips with his new reality.

2.6.2 Character

Frank Machin has great determination. In addition to this quality, and almost contrary to it, he has almost childish behaviour at times, expressing himself through great anger, physical aggressiveness, and straightforwardly presented wishes and desires. His endeavours to approach Mrs. Hammond romantically are faltered by his character, although his new riches allow him to take her and her children out for a day in the park, in his new, expensive car. He shows great affection for the children, thus indicating he has a sympathetic side as well.

In gaining success on the rugby field, Frank shows that his determination has paid off. While his character is brutal and intimidating, there are moments where the viewer can witness his softer sides. Inching his way up from his working-class surroundings, creating sympathy in both the viewer and Mrs. Hammond along the way, Frank may fit the description of a working-class hero.

2.7 *The Full Monty (Northern England, 1997)*

2.7.1 Plot

When several men in a small community in Northern England lose their jobs, despair soon turns into creativity. A show by the male stripping group, the Chippendales, is performed in their city, and Gaz forms an initiative to create their own version of a male stripping show. Gathering some friends, his earlier boss, and by holding an audition, Gaz finally assembles a group of local unemployed men willing to give what it takes. They must go one step further than the Chippendales; full nudity.

2.7.2 Character

Gaz is unemployed and divorced. He loves his son, although the kid feels estranged, running off at times. Levelling his frustration at his former boss, while receiving threats from his ex-wife about losing custody for his son, Gaz is increasingly desperate to find out how he is to tackle these problems. As the story progresses, he proclaims his love for his son, including him in several activities, such as the selection process at the audition.

The story unfolds in Sheffield, England, where the once thriving steel industry has broken down, resulting in mass unemployment. Through all the desperation that follows, Gaz is intent on increasing his own and others' life quality. Low on money, but full in love, he takes care of his son as best he can, while initiating an event that will bring not only money, but also joy to the community. This is behaviour that would well qualify him as a working-class hero.

2.8 *Billy Elliot (Northern England, 2000)*

2.8.1 Plot

Billy Elliot tells the story of young Billy and his family during the miners' strike in 1980s Northern England. His father and brother are on strike, and the city is made unsafe from angry agitators and abusive police. All the while, Billy attends boxing classes, with which he is not content. Sharing the same locales as the boxing lessons is Mrs. Wilkinson's ballet classes. Billy takes interest, and is soon hooked. Mrs. Wilkinson encourages him, while Billy's father deems ballet unfit for boys. Funded by a local initiative in his town, Billy's talent brings him

to an audition at the Royal Ballet School in London, where he finally gains recognition from his father.

2.8.2 Character

Billy lives with his father, brother, and grandmother. His mother has passed away. In a male-dominated society, he is at first reluctant to continue taking ballet classes. However, he becomes determined to practice ballet regularly, receiving great amounts of encouragement from Mrs. Wilkinson. He opposes his father on the topic of ballet, helps his grandmother through her day and is open-minded towards his best friend Michael's habit of dressing up in women's clothing.

Coming from a working-class community, starting ballet studies at the Royal Ballet School, it can be said that Billy strives to make his life better. He is also a character that inspires sympathy, so calling him a working-class hero seems fitting.

3 METHODOLOGY

Diction Coach: “Moses supposes his toeses are roses, but Moses supposes erroneously. Moses he knowses his toeses aren't roses as Moses supposes his toeses to be.”

Singin' in the Rain (1952)

3.1 *Material*

The data collected for this thesis come from speech in motion pictures. The speech data are used to map speech patterns of certain speakers (see section 1.8 for speaker selection criteria). The speakers are presented in chapter 2.

The speech data will provide a sufficient number of tokens for each specific feature of accent that this thesis investigates. The aim is to have 50 tokens for each feature, which is well above what is considered sufficient for a reliable quantitative analysis. Guy (1980: 19-20) found that when “[a]bove 10 tokens there is 90% conformity with the expected pattern, whereas [when] below 10 tokens only 63% of the relationships are as expected. Above 35 tokens, there is 100% conformity”. In relation to Guy’s findings, the aim of 50 tokens for the present work should suffice.

As was detailed in section 1.5, not just any selection of films has been arrived at. A number of factors that would group the films according to character, setting, geography, occupation and gender were applied. This was necessary, both to narrow the selection of films, and to allow for comparable data.

Since this thesis aims to investigate how English working-class accents have been portrayed in British film, certain limitations had to be applied to the material. All characters in the chosen films are young males. They must have grown up in a working-class society in either London or Northern England, and still reside there. Also, they must be the lead character, or one of the lead characters.

The films have been divided between two time periods, and two geographical regions. It is hoped that the former will provide valuable data on speech changes in these films over time. The latter makes it possible to gather data from two separate regions, in our case, London and Northern England. Broadening the available data this way will lend strength to the findings.

In choosing eight films, it is believed that the significant amounts of data provided by these will make well-founded conclusions possible. The two geographical regions are represented by four films each. For each region, the four films are again divided according to their time of release, the 1960s and the 2000s, respectively.

3.2 *Presentation of accents*

It was stated earlier that the films used represent London and Northern England. This section will describe features of these regional accents.

3.2.1 London

While the typical working-class accent of London is said to be Cockney (Wells 1982: 301-302), it is not the only accent of London, working-class or otherwise. Barring any foreign accents, the city also houses London-raised speakers who speak an accent referred to as Popular London, while still others speak what is called London Regional Standard (Wells 1982: 302-303). Then there is Estuary English, a term coined by Rosewarne (1984, in Hughes et al 2005: 5), and usually defined as an accent mixture of working-class London speech and RP (Hughes et al 2005: 5). According to Hughes et al (ibid.), Estuary English makes lower-class speakers appear to be higher class, while middle and upper-class speakers may appear to speak some lower status accent. If that is the case, it would fit well with the social levelling that apparently has been progressing in Britain for some years (ibid.).

It has been noted that London, by virtue of being the capital city of the U.K., has long affected adjacent areas, and RP, with its particular linguistic innovations. This includes working-class features spreading into higher-class accents (Altendorf & Watt 2004: 184-185; Wells 1982: 301).

Of Cockney and Popular London, the latter is somewhat closer to RP, according to Wells (1982: 302). He further notes a couple of ways that one can tell the difference. Looking at the pronunciation of MOUTH¹ words, Cockney seems to show usage of a monophthong, while Popular London uses a diphthong. Another indicator is glottalling of fricatives, thought to be particular to Cockney. However, it is important to keep in mind that there are no clear-

¹ Words in capital letters indicate Standard Lexical Sets (see Wells 1982). Examples include, but are not limited to, MOUTH, FACE, GOAT, PUT, CUT, BATH, FOOT, and STRUT. All words belonging to one such Standard Lexical Set share the same vowel quality.

cut regional lines where people stop speaking one accent or dialect and start speaking another. Thus, a great deal of overlapping occurs.

Cockney is related to London's East End, that is, the inner suburbs of London. Popular London, on the other hand, is associated with working-class speakers from suburban London (Wells 1982: 302-303).

In addition to T Reduction, Diphthong Shift, and H Dropping, which are discussed in this chapter, other salient features of Cockney and Popular London are TH Fronting and L Vocalisation.

TH Fronting consists in using voiceless labiodental fricative [f] and voiced labiodental fricative [v], where the standard variants are voiceless dental fricative [θ] and voiced dental fricative [ð], in words such as *think* and *bother*. Altendorf and Watt (2004: 192) notes that, for London and South eastern accents, [θ] can occur in initial, middle and final positions (e.g. *thing, anything, sleuth*), while [ð] occurs in non-initial positions (e.g. *mother, with*).

L Vocalisation denotes the phenomenon where post-vocalic alveolar lateral fricative [ɬ] is exchanged for a vowel. Wells (1982: 258) identifies this vowel as a non-syllabic back vocoid, [ɤ], or a rounded [o], noting that there exists some variability as to the exact quality. Examples where L Vocalisation may be found are *mill, milk, shelf*. In Wells' (1982: 259) transcription, the latter two are written [miök] and [ʃeöf]. Altendorf and Watt (2004: 196) speculate that L Vocalisation may lead to new diphthongs that consist of the vocalised variant and its preceding vowel. They also note that L Vocalisation is spreading both regionally and socially upwards (ibid.).

3.2.2 Northern England

While enough films to represent the London area were found, a sufficient number of films to represent a specific city in Northern England could not be located. Therefore, focus was shifted towards the region as a whole, looking at features common among speakers who are indigenous to the Northern England region.

Opinions on what constitutes the linguistic north in England seem mostly to agree. Wells (1982: 349-350) adopts the position that suggests Northern English includes all regional accents north of the Severn – Wash line (see appendix A). This would include not only the geographical north, but also the Midlands. Within this delimitation, Wells further

distinguishes between the midlands, the middle north, and the far north. Rydland (2000: 30) conforms to the same definition. Wales (2006: 9-24) cites several definitions of geographical and linguistic regions as made by laypeople, linguists, historians and institutions. She acknowledges that the Severn – Wash line is cited in many works as dividing the North from the South, although not automatically in linguistic terms (Wales 2006: 22).

Perhaps the most well-known feature that distinguishes Northern England accents from southern accents is the lack of the PUT-CUT Split. While speakers who are not from the linguistic north have both /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ in their sound systems, Northern speakers do not have /ʌ/ as part of their vowel set. This means that all PUT and CUT words are pronounced with the back rounded vowel /ʊ/, creating a number of homophones. A common example is *putt* – *put*, which, while semantically different, will both be pronounced /put/ by a Northerner. Other homophones are *book* – *buck*, *look* – *luck*. In parts of Northern England (and in Ireland), certain PUT words possess /u:/ rather than /ʊ/. This particularly applies to words spelled –*ook*, such as *book*, *look* and *cook* (Wells 1982: 133). Furthermore, some accents in Northern England (also some in the Midlands and in Wales) have been subject to the STRUT-Schwa Merger, resulting in a stressed [ə] in place of /ʌ/ (Wells 1982: 132).

Other well-known features of Northern England accents are results of monophthongisation. Words belonging to the lexical sets of FACE and GOAT are typically subject to this process. While the standard reference point (see Wells 1982) for these lexical sets are the diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/, respectively, speakers with Northern England accents will show monophthongised long vowels /e:/ and /o:/ for FACE and GOAT, respectively. This means that FACE words are pronounced /fe:s/ rather than RP /feɪs/, and GOAT words are pronounced /go:t/ rather than RP /gəʊt/, by many Northerners.

Another salient feature is what is known as BATH Broadening. This results in short front vowel /a/ in BATH words in Northern England accents, rather than the long back vowel /ɑ:/ heard in RP. Thus *half*, *calf* are pronounced [haf], [kaf] in Northern England accents.

3.3 *Presentation of the variables*

This section will present the variables which are analysed in this thesis, including their respective variants.

For London, the accent features investigated are T Reduction, H Dropping and Diphthong Shift. For the latter, there is an exclusive focus on FACE words (see Wells 1982).

For Northern England, FACE Monophthongisation, GOAT Monophthongisation and Unsplit PUT-CUT are investigated.

The above features have been chosen for being typically representative of the working class and the geographical regions investigated.

Unless noted otherwise in the text, the following is based primarily on Wells (1982).

3.3.1 H Dropping

H Dropping is the loss of /h/ in lexical words. In standard accents of English, /h/ is found in syllable-initial positions, word-initially, and intervocalically. /h/ may be realised as [h] or [ʔ], or not at all, signified by Ø. The quality of /h/ is affected by the vowel which follows it, so that we may understand /h/ as representing a range of voiceless approximants. In intervocalic positions /h/ may sometimes be realised as the voiced glottal fricative [ɦ], which can also be understood as representing “a range of breathy-voiced vocoids” (Wells 1982: 253).

Described in phonetic terms, [h] is conventionally known as a voiceless glottal fricative. [ʔ] is a glottal plosive, while Ø means there is no articulation. When H Dropping occurs, the result is often Ø and sometimes [ʔ]. Minimal pairs such as *hill-ill*, *hold-old*, *hate-eight* show the contrastive use between [h] and Ø/[ʔ]. H Dropping is often realised as [ʔ] in initial positions. While H Dropping would result in minimal pairs like *hold-old* being pronounced [əʊld], and thus losing their phonetic distinction, their semantic distinction is still retained in the speaker’s mind.

H Dropping is particularly wide-spread in the working-class accents of England. It is therefore not uncommon to hear such working-class speakers utter words like *house*, *hangover*, *hospital* and *heaven* with no initial [h]. They all start with a vowel or [ʔ].

A number of sociolinguistic studies have found that H Dropping is an important social indicator, and the absence of initial [h] is both stigmatised and indicative of class membership.

The percentage of dropped /h/s increases as one goes from higher social classes to lower social classes. For example, middle-class speakers try not to ‘drop their aitches’, unless the words are unstressed and non-lexical, where H Dropping would be socially non-indicative (Altendorf & Watt 2004: 192).

Although not a social indicator, grammatical words and function words regularly lack [h]. *He, him, her, his, has, have, had* are in most cases unstressed and, unless they appear postpausal, thus lack [h]. This happens in RP as well, and should not be considered being examples of H Dropping.

Where /h/ falls on unstressed syllables in multi-syllable words, like *historic* and *hysteria*, RP often omits /h/ in the unstressed syllable, producing [ɪˈstɒrɪk] and [ɪˈstɛəriə]. Accordingly, it became customary to precede *historic* with the indefinite article *an*, rather than *a*.

H Dropping in lexical words has been a feature of Popular London speech since the 1700s, and the dislike for it was first recorded towards the end of that same century. The spread of H Dropping in English varieties spoken around the world is attributable to British conquests of continents, and British settlers’ establishment on new-found land. The presence of H Dropping in Australia, and lack of it in the United States, makes it possible also to understand when this feature developed.

In collecting tokens with possible H Dropping, any such instance has been marked as [h] when audible friction from the glottis could be heard. These were labelled as representative of standard speech. Non-standard speech was represented by [ʔ] and Ø, that is, when a full closure of the glottis was performed (a glottal plosive), or when there was no articulation of /h/ at all. Both of these non-standard variants were labelled Ø.

3.3.2 Diphthong Shift

A monophthong is a vowel sound where there is no change in vowel quality within the same syllable. Conversely, a diphthong has a single change in vowel quality (a triphthong has two changes in vowel quality within the same syllable) (Crystal 1980: 113). A diphthong may be understood as a glide from one vowel quality to another vowel quality within one syllable.

Rydland (2000: 25-26), discussing Popular London English, defines the Diphthong Shift as “a symmetrical shift in the starting-point of the closing diphthongs of FACE, PRICE,

CHOICE, GOAT and MOUTH”, when compared to RP. Looking at figure 1 below (from Altendorf & Watt 2004: 189), the symmetrical shift is explained in an accessible manner.

Table 3. London Diphthong Shift (adapted from Wells 1982: 308, 310)

RP:	i:	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ	ɑʊ	əʊ	u:
	↘	↘	↘	↘	↙	↙	↙
PL:	ɪi	ʌɪ	ɑɪ	ɔɪ	æʊ	ʌʊ	ʊə
	↘	↘	↘	↘	↙	↙	↙
Cockney:	əi	aɪ	ɒɪ	oɪ	æ:	a - ʊ	əʊ ~ ɜ:

Figure 1: London Diphthong Shift

This figure also shows that there are social differences in pronunciation between suburban and inner-city working-classes in London. Popular London (suburban) is closer to RP than Cockney (inner-city). What can be further drawn from the above figure is that the Diphthong Shift affects the vowel or vowels in each of the standard lexical sets mentioned by Rydland in a symmetrical manner. This means that the RP diphthong in all FACE words is [eɪ], while for Popular London it has shifted to [ʌɪ], and for Cockney it has shifted even further, to [aɪ].

Considering RP and Cockney, the starting-point for the RP variant in FACE words is close-mid front, while for Cockney it is open front. Wells (1982: 307) suggests a wider definition of central [ʌ] in relation to London speech. He recommends it is “interpreted in an elastic way as reflecting the quality of STRUT, a central or front vowel in London speech”. He states that the starting point of the London accent vowel is opener and more central “so that the diphthong ranges from popular London [eɪ] or [ʌɪ] (= [ɛɪ, ʊɪ]) to broad Cockney [æɪ ~ aɪ]”.

For our purposes, we are interested in the Diphthong Shift when involving FACE words. This thesis operates with a system of binary categorisation, reflecting standard and non-standard accent features. When collecting tokens in relation to Diphthong Shift in FACE words, these were put into one of two categories. Diphthongs with a close-mid front starting point and close-front ending point, [eɪ], were considered standard, while diphthong variants reminiscent of Popular London and Cockney, together with the variants cited from Wells above, were labelled simply as [aɪ] when collected, thus giving them status as non-standard variants.

3.3.3 T Reduction

T Reduction is rather common in English. In General American it is one of the most noticeable accent features of that dialect, and /t/ is commonly pronounced [ɾ]. It is found in English dialects spoken south of the equator, such as in Australia and New Zealand, and also in certain accents in Britain, where it often results in either [ʔ] or [ɾ]. Unreduced /t/ is recognised as [t].

T Reduction includes Glottalisation and T Voicing. Glottalisation can be sectioned into two main groups. One is *Glottal reinforcement*. The other is *T Glottalling*, also known as *Glottal replacement*. T Voicing is represented here as the alveolar tap [ɾ].

Glottal reinforcement is when [ʔ] precedes voiceless /p, t, k/ and the affricate /tʃ/.

Wells (1982: 260) notes that glottal stops seem to occur “only when /p, t, k, tʃ/ are in syllable-final position” and also “only when /p, t, k, tʃ/ are preceded by a vowel, a liquid, or a nasal”. This is not as stigmatised as T Glottalling, and can be observed in RP.

T Glottalling replaces [t] with [ʔ]. In prevocalic positions, this is considered a feature of broad speech, or of working-class speech (Rydland 2000: 27). However, it is increasingly found in prevocalic environments in standardised speech, but normally not word-internally (as in *butter* vs. *but a*).

T Voicing is the insertion of [ɾ] instead of [t], so that *matter*, *better* are pronounced [ˈmæɾə], [ˈbeɾə]. This may occur in environments where /t/ is preceded by a sonorant and not followed by a consonant. Syllabic [l] marks the exception concerning the latter, so that *bottle* may be pronounced [ˈbɒɾl]. T Voicing is recognised as a feature of Cockney. Sivertsen (1960: 199) found her Bethnal Green informants to recognise [ɾ] as the normal, or correct, variant, and [t] as being too posh for Cockneys, “at least when it is strongly affricated in [the environment 'V_V]”. Both Sivertsen (1960: 119) and Trudgill (1986: 20) note that the glottal stop is more stigmatised than the alveolar tap. Trudgill (ibid.) claims that the alveolar tap “is a convenient way out of having to select a pronunciation which is socially marked in one way

or another”. He thus places it in between the standard variant [t] and the non-standard variant [ʔ].

For this dissertation, the focus is specifically on T Reduction in intervocalic positions, but instances where T Reduction potentially precedes syllabic /l/ have been included as well.

The social stigmatisation of intervocalic T Glottalling, a common feature of Cockney, is strong. T Glottalling in other environments is less stigmatised, or not stigmatised at all, occurring, for example, in RP. Although well known in London, T Glottalling has also gained ground in the Southeast and other parts of the United Kingdom (Altendorf and Watt 2004: 192-193).

According to Altendorf and Watt (2004: 193), T Glottalling has recently been found to exhibit greater use than before, in all social classes. However, the frequency of use and the distribution of [ʔ] between social classes vary, so that social differentiation is still upheld.

Altendorf and Watt found that middle-class speakers are wary of using socially stigmatised variants of T Glottalling when speaking formally. This was found to be contrary to working-class speakers’ usage. Upper-middle class speakers demonstrated less frequent use and distribution of glottalisation than did middle-class speakers.

During collection of tokens representing possible T Reduction, three variants were identified. These were the alveolar plosive [t], the glottal plosive [ʔ], and the alveolar tap [ɾ]. The alveolar plosive was noted as a standard variant, while the glottal plosive and the alveolar tap were considered non-standard. Non-standard variants for /h/ are represented by [ʔ].

3.3.4 FACE and GOAT Monophthongisation

In RP, FACE words have in common that they share the stressed front narrow closing diphthong /eɪ/. Commonly in Northern England, FACE words are monophthongised, resulting in close-mid front [e:].

Monophthongisation of GOAT words is found to have a regional distribution similar to that of FACE words, both in and outside of England. The lack of Long Mid Diphthonging means that, in some northern parts of England, [o:] never developed into [əʊ]. While RP [əʊ] has a mid-central unrounded starting point, and ends in a close back rounded position, [o:] is close-mid back rounded.

According to Beal (2004: 123), the monophthongal variants [e:] and [o:] are common in traditional dialects of the lower North, and in central Lancashire and Humberside, with diphthongal variants surfacing in the far North and Merseyside. She further explains that variants range from the centring diphthongs /iə/ and /uə/ to variants that are closer to the RP closing diphthongs present in these lexical sets.

Rydland (2000: 32) states that diphthongs in FACE and GOAT words are widespread in southern parts of the linguistic North, although possessing somewhat more open starting-points (/ɛɪ/, /ɔʊ/) than those found in RP. The vowel in GOAT words has a back rounded starting-point for Northern accents, whereas RP has a mid central starting-point, so that GOAT words in some Northern accents has /ɔʊ/, while it is [əʊ] in RP. Rydland places monophthongal use to popular accents further north.

However, monophthongisation of these two lexical sets is considered a distinctive speech feature of Northern England, and will be treated as representative of general Northern England speech in this thesis.

For this work, the divisive factor has been whether tokens exhibited monophthongal or diphthongal qualities. The former were considered non-standard, while the latter were considered standard.

3.3.5 Unsplit PUT-CUT

The development from using just one vowel to distinguishing between two vowels for PUT and CUT words is referred to as a split or, more accurately, the PUT-CUT Split. Some linguists refer to it as the FOOT-STRUT Split. The term applied throughout this thesis, when referring to analyses of data from Northern England, is Unsplit PUT-CUT.

The establishment of the PUT-CUT Split in England has been narrowed down to around 1630, during the Middle English period (Rydland 1999: 17). Prior to the Split, all PUT and CUT words were pronounced with Middle English /u/. As a result of the Split, CUT words abandoned this vowel, instead gaining /ʌ/. PUT words developed their vowel into /ʊ/. A number of words now belonging to PUT and CUT, however, derive from Middle English long /o:/. Some words with /o:/ underwent vowel shortening quite early, prior to the Split, and acquired /ʌ/, while those that had their vowel shortened at a later date, obtained /ʊ/.

While Wells holds that the lack of the PUT-CUT Split is present in broad accents in Northern England, Beal (2004: 121) assigns the lack of the Split to everywhere in England north of Birmingham. Rydland (2000: 31) finds that usage of /ʊ/ increases the further north one goes, while /ʌ/ is most prominent in “the southern parts of the northern speech area”. Regardless, Unsplit PUT-CUT means there is, in general, no distinction between minimal pairs like *look-luck*, *foot-fat*, *could-cud* in Northern England accents, and neither was there in Middle English. The minimal pairs all exhibit /ʊ/ in today’s broad accents in Northern England and exhibited /u/ only during the period of Middle English. Halfway through the eighteenth century the use of /ʊ/ in CUT words was recognised as being a Northern speech feature (Beal, *ibid.*).

The phoneme /ʊ/ is a close to close-mid back weakly rounded short vowel, but in its Northern incarnation it may have more open and/or more back qualities (Rydland 2000: 31). The phoneme /ʌ/, on the other hand, is an open central unrounded short vowel. The latter does exist in Northern England usage, as there is some social stigmatisation towards using /ʊ/ in CUT words. /ʌ/ is found among middle-class speakers who attempt using it for CUT words. On an individual speaker basis, usage is not consistent and alternates between /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ (*ibid.*).

Some speakers show intermediate variants placing themselves somewhere between /ʊ/ and /ʌ/. Wells (1982: 352) notes that speakers with intermediate variants distinguish PUT words from CUT words, although the latter do not exhibit /ʌ/ in these cases, but some other vowel. Such a vowel may be the unrounded close-mid back [ɤ] or the mid-back [ɯ], or a central and unrounded schwa, [ə], in both mid and half-close positions. Also possible is a vowel similar to the cardinal [ʌ] in it being half-open and unrounded or somewhat rounded.

Wells (1982: 353) also mentions hypercorrection, where the vowel in PUT words may be realised as [ə ~ ʌ], as a result of the speaker trying to sound like higher-class speech variants.

Given the variability of possible pronunciations that could represent PUT and CUT words, the categorisation of tokens into /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ was simplified through analysing whether

there was lip rounding or not during articulation. If lip rounding occurred, the token was labelled [ʊ]. Unrounded articulations were labelled [ʌ].

3.3.6 Categorising variables into standard and non-standard variants

All variables were treated as having binary qualities. The point of interest was whether they exhibited a standard variant or a non-standard variant. Some variation within non-standard variants was recorded, and will be commented upon in chapter 4. The following table shows which variants were used for each variable.

Table 3.1. Standard and non-standard variants used for each variable

	Standard variant	Non-standard variant
H Dropping	[h]	Ø
Diphthong Shift (FACE)	[eɪ]	[aɪ]
T Reduction	[t]	[ʔ]
FACE Monophthongisation	[eɪ]	[e:]
GOAT Monophthongisation	[əʊ]	[o:]
Unsplit PUT-CUT	[ʌ]	[ʊ]

While it is obvious that the speakers' variants oftentimes ranged along a continuum, the above symbols have been used to represent the range of variants that could be categorised as being either standard or non-standard.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Collecting the data

The first action taken in gathering appropriate material, was establishing what exactly the thesis would investigate. Having developed a hypothesis and decided on accents, accent

features, regions, representative speakers, genre, and time periods, searching for relevant films was the next step. However, with all the attributes that needed to be fulfilled, the available number of films would turn out to be more limited than expected. Several possible films had to be rejected as they, in one way or another, did not fulfil the prerequisites. While the most desirable genre was drama, not all films are purely of that genre. Some web pages (such as imdb.com) categorise several of the chosen films as belonging to any number of genres, such as comedy, drama, crime, thriller, romance, sport, and so on. It was therefore necessary to apply some criteria to help in deciding what genre the eight films used for this thesis belong to. The main concern has been that they adhere to the drama genre strongly enough for the characters to be believable. For dramas that have elements of comedy in them, it was important that the comedic elements did not turn working-class characters into vehicles of comic relief. The motivation behind preferring drama as the dominant genre in these films is based on a belief that characters would then receive a more balanced portrayal in light of their personal background.

Choosing films would also mean watching them during the selection process. This would provide me with a feel for what material was there. As an extra, precautionary step, watching the films would function as quality assurance of the material. This process eliminated, for example, the 2004 remake of *Alfie*, as the story had been moved out of London, now taking place in New York. As each film was eventually decided upon, the characters of interest were identified. These are presented in chapter 2.

For viewing the material, a specific Media Player for home computers was used. The VLC Media Player² (<http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>) is available for a great number of OS platforms, and served as the exclusive programme with which the films were watched. This secured a common standard through which data collection could be carried out. The hours, minutes, and seconds that were noted down when locating utterances by speakers, were gathered from the VLC Media Player's information display. Any other programme or DVD player, or revised versions of the VLC Media Player, may produce slightly different time stamps. The OS used in conjunction with the VLC Media Player when collecting data for this thesis is Windows Vista Basic.

The next step was to locate every section of speech uttered by each character of interest. Every such section was diligently noted down in a separate document, down to the second. For example, Phil, from *All or Nothing*, speaks at 01:05:33-01:05:59, that is, from 1h

² VLC Media Player version 0.9.9 used.

5min 33sec to 1h 5min 59sec into the film. Temporal segmentation was applied in a not too standardised approach, mainly being inserted whenever a character had a relatively longer break from speaking, without anyone else speaking in the meantime. If someone else spoke, segmentation would usually be inserted, unless the character of interest got involved in a dialogue where both parties participated roughly equally. In such cases, no segmentation would be introduced, but rather, the character's parts of the dialogue would be noted down as a continuous stream.

When all sections of speech had been located and noted down, the film would be re-run in order to produce an orthographic transcription of the dialogue. For some of the films, all dialogue has been transcribed. For others, however, sometimes only the first part of the film's running time has been transcribed. This is because the various characters vary in the amount of speech they produce. While *All or Nothing* and *Billy Elliot* had all speech by Phil and Billy transcribed, *Alfie* only received a transcription for the first half hour. This is simply because Alfie speaks a lot, so that a sufficient number of tokens are readily available not even halfway through the film.

When dialogue for all eight films had been noted down, the job to mark possible tokens (lexical words) began. This initial marking was based on the transcribed material, using Standard Lexical Sets³ and documentation on the various features, such as H Dropping and Diphthong Shift, as guiding principles. Possible tokens were highlighted with specific colours designated to each variable, so that they would be easily recognisable in the transcripts. Figure 2 below is taken from the transcript of *All or Nothing*.

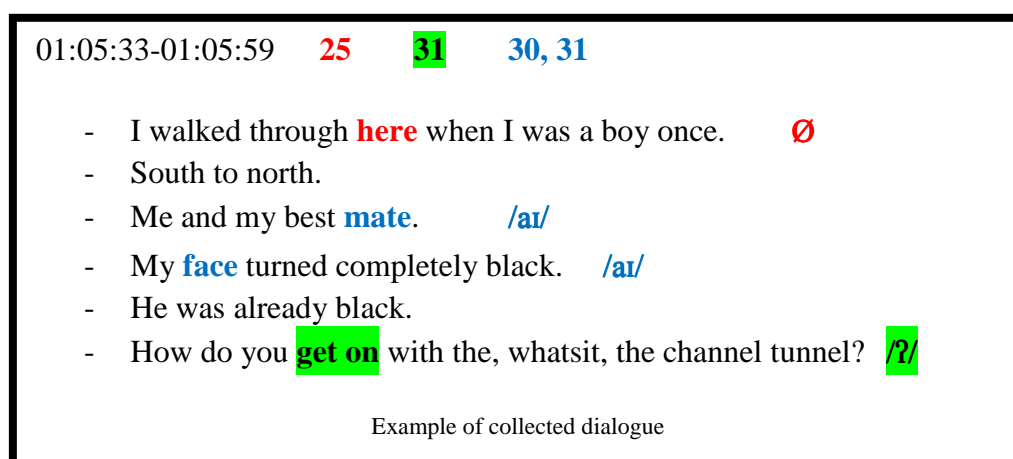


Figure 2: Excerpt of transcript from *All or Nothing*

³ See Wells (1982).

The figure shows a time sequence within which Phil speaks, what he is saying, and what variant he uses in the lexical tokens investigated. In the example provided, a token with H Dropping is coloured red, an example of T Reduction is highlighted with a green background, and two instances of Diphthong Shift are coloured blue.⁴

All tokens were assigned a number, so that they could both be counted and later re-checked, if necessary. To exemplify further, figure 2 contains instance number 25 of possible H Dropping. This particular example shows that /h/ was realised as Ø.

When all tokens in all eight transcripts had been marked, the results were put into a separate document, where the distribution and frequency of all variants were systematised. An example of this can be seen in figure 3 below. As can be seen for H Dropping, there were only 47 tokens, or lexical words, found. Ten of these were inaudible, so that 37 tokens provided data on whether Phil dropped his aitches or not. For T Reduction, 55 tokens were collected. This is because five of the tokens collected were inaudible. Since the aim of this thesis was to collect 50 tokens for each variable, such measures of “over-collecting” were made when sufficient numbers of tokens were available. For the Diphthong Shift, Phil used [aɪ] exclusively, and none of the first 50 tokens were inaudible. Thus, 50 tokens exactly were collected in this instance.

⁴ The green background marks where possible tokens for T Reduction could be found across word boundaries. Many tokens were, in fact, found in these environments. In this specific example, T Reduction is recognised thus: /'geʔɒn/.

<i>All or Nothing</i> (London 2000)			
H Dropping	=	Red colour	
1. Variables (47 total):			
a. Total tokens with [h]	=	11	
b. Total tokens with Ø	=	26	
c. Total uncertain tokens	=	0	
d. Total inaudible tokens	=	10	
T Reduction	=	Green colour	
1. variables (55 total):			
a. Total tokens with [t]	=	0	
b. Total tokens with [ʔ]	=	44	
c. Total tokens with [r]	=	4	
d. Total tokens with Ø	=	2	
e. Total uncertain tokens	=	0	
f. Total inaudible tokens	=	5	
Diphthong Shift (FACE)	=	Blue colour	
1. Variables (50 total):			
a. Total tokens with [eɪ]	=	0	
b. Total tokens with [aɪ]	=	50	
c. Total uncertain tokens	=	0	
d. Total inaudible tokens	=	0	
Example of summarised tokens			

Figure 3: Summary of tokens in *All or Nothing*

Having completed the data collection, a summary containing all tokens from all films was assembled. This summary lists the total number of collected tokens for each film, together with which variants were found and how many there were of each variant. From these data, preliminary conclusions were suggested, and then proper analysis commenced.

In analysing vowels for this thesis, it is important to note some challenges connected to them. Vowels have variants that range along a phonetic continuum. This creates additional difficulties in analysing them, as no predetermined boundaries exist. Such boundaries were therefore employed by the researcher. The data were approached with the intent to categorise variables into a binary system. This system would determine whether a speaker had a RP-like standard variant or a non-standard variant, such as those of Cockney or regional Northern England accent.

For this dissertation, an auditory technique was used in analysing the variables. This means that variables were listened to repeatedly by the researcher, until a variant could be categorised according to the categories drawn up by the researcher himself. As the repeated

listening went on, the researcher's sense of phonetic detail improved, so that the extensive data collection also provided training in listening to and recognising variants. One may refer to this process as impressionistic coding, since the identification of variants is based exclusively on the researcher's observations. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 144) stress that discrete variants are relatively unproblematic with regards to binary categorisation. For the present thesis this means that the consonants investigated were fairly straightforward to analyse. Where variants range along a continuum, which is common for vowels, some challenges arise. The authors point out that the researcher "must impose some classificatory system that establishes boundaries between groups of observed forms" (ibid.). It is possible to distinguish several variants along a continuum but, for the present thesis, the boundaries were binary. For all variables investigated for this dissertation, and where a continuum may be observed, the category system applied distinguishes between standard and non-standard variants. Explanations of what constitutes standard and non-standard variants for the variables investigated are found in section 3.3.6.

To ensure that my method of data analyses was valid, my supervisor listened through parts of the material used. There was sufficient agreement between our respective analyses to consider the classification reliable.

3.4.2 Treatment of the data

Most of the films were subtitled in English. This eased transcription as the subtitles could be used as guidance when speech seemed unclear. However, I remained faithful to the actual speech of the characters, not the subtitles, as the latter often differ slightly from on-screen speech. This is because there is limited space in which the subtitles can convey the speech on the screen. For those films that were not subtitled, transcription relied solely on my own hearing.

One of the films, *Sparrows Can't Sing*, is a rarity, unavailable in proper DVD quality. The copy obtained is a VHS-to-DVD transfer. It further seems that the VHS source comes from a television recording, judging by the smudged-out logo in the upper right corner of the screen. These factors take their toll on the quality of the transfer, so that sound, in particular, is often unclear. Given the somewhat bad sound quality, several stretches of speech have been skipped because of unintelligibility. However, there was enough speech in the film, by the character Charlie, for enough tokens to be collected for each variable.

The aim was to collect 50 tokens of each speech feature per film. A good number of tokens beyond the first 50 were marked in the transcripts. These additional tokens took the

place of any tokens that could not be used. Unintelligible tokens were thus skipped, and the next intelligible token was used instead.

3.4.3 Quantifying the data

This is a quantitative study in that variants of each variable have been counted. Quantifying the data allows us to determine the relative frequency of each variant. When counting of variants was completed, percentage scores were calculated. Counting provides numbers on how many cases of each variant are present in the data, while percentage scores assist in determining the degree of variation. In our case, we measure the degree of non-standardness.

Percentage scores have been calculated for each variable per film. Based on those scores, mean percentage scores for all variables per film have also been calculated, along with other combinations of percentage scores. All of these calculations are presented in full in the tables found in chapter 4.

4 ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Phoebe Dinsmore:	[giving Lina diction lessons] “Repeat after me - Tah, Tey, Tee, Toe, Too.”
Lina Lamont:	“Tah, Tey, Tye, Tow, Tyo.”
Phoebe Dinsmore:	“No, no, no Miss Lamont, Round tones, round tones. Now, let me hear you read your line.”
Lina Lamont:	“And I cayn't stand'im.”
Phoebe Dinsmore:	“And I can't stand him.”
Lina Lamont:	“And I cayn't stand'im.”
Phoebe Dinsmore:	“Can't.”
Lina Lamont:	“Cayn't.”
Phoebe Dinsmore:	“Caaaaan't.”
Lina Lamont:	“Cayyyyn't.”

Singin' in the Rain (1952)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the results of the collected data. 19 tables arrange the data in various ways. The variables analysed will first be presented and discussed in relation to the film they are lifted from. Then the subsequent tables will combine data according to time period and region in a variety of ways. The two last tables present the mean percentage of non-standard varieties across all three variables in each of the eight films, and the relative frequency of the glottal stop [ʔ] vs. the alveolar tap [ɾ] in the London films.

Altogether, 1133 tokens were analysed in working on this thesis. These produce the fundament on which the results detailed in this chapter rest. Each token has been categorised according to whether it represents a standard or a non-standard variant.

Based on the hypothesis, I expected to find the following: Given that attitudes towards language change through time, we know that regional accents in England were marginalised to a greater degree in previous decades, whereas today there is less stigmatisation of regional varieties. This study is investigating whether these attitudes have been reflected in English films over a forty-year period. Possible changes having occurred during this period are investigated through studying films from the 1960s and the 2000s. As was detailed in section 1.1, it is expected, because of less stigmatisation, that the working-class hero of 1960s films

will have fewer regional features in his accent, while the working-class hero of films from the 2000s will possess more regional features.

Variants were often to be found along a continuum of pronunciations. Depending on the purpose of a given study, multiple categories may be employed, making a very detailed investigation possible. In the present study, the focus is on standard vs. non-standard variants, so that the use of two possible categories per variable is sufficient for our purposes (see section 3.3 for information about which criteria were used to categorise the variants).

All results are drawn from 50 audible and categorised tokens for each variable per film. Exceptions from this pattern are tokens of H Dropping for *All or Nothing*, where only 37 could be used (ten out of 47 tokens were inaudible), even though all of Phil's speech in the film was transcribed. Another exception is *Snatch*, where no more than 48 tokens of H Dropping were of any use (one out of 49 tokens was inaudible). Lastly, there is *Billy Elliot*, where only 23 tokens of FACE Monophthongisation were present in the whole film (all tokens were audible) and 29 tokens of GOAT Monophthongisation (eight out of 37 tokens were inaudible) were collected.

4.2 Analyses of each film individually

This section will present analyses of all eight films individually. Tables 4.1 through 4.8 each present data on the variables analysed for each particular film. The leftmost column denotes the variables investigated, while the top row explains what the numbers represent. "N tokens" is the number of tokens collected per variable, "N non-standard" is the amount of collected tokens that were non-standard, and "% non-standard" shows how many per cent of the collected tokens were non-standard.

4.2.1 *Sparrows Can't Sing* (London, 1963)

Table 4.1. *Sparrows Can't Sing*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	50	43	86,0
T Reduction	50	48	96,0
Diphthong Shift	50	37	74,0

From the 50 tokens collected for H Dropping, 43 tokens were realised as Ø. The remaining seven were realised as the standard variant [h]. This suggests a very high usage of a non-standard variant for H Dropping.

Out of the 48 non-standard variants found for T Reduction, 17 instances were recognised as [ʔ], and 31 instances as [ɾ]. These numbers show that T Reduction has a very high occurrence, and that [ɾ] is more frequent than [ʔ] for T Reduction. As noted earlier (see section 3.3.3), the alveolar tap is considered to be less non-standard than the glottal stop, so that Charlie's T Reduction pattern is weighted towards the less non-standard spectrum.

The distribution of standard and non-standard variants is somewhat more even for Diphthong Shift than for the other variables. Here we find that 37 tokens were realised as non-standard [aɪ].

Looking at the percentage values, both H Dropping and T Reduction occur in a great majority of cases, especially the latter variant. Diphthong Shift has a somewhat lower score, with 74,0 per cent, but this could still be considered as showing a preference for non-standard usage for this particular variable.

4.2.2 *Alfie* (London, 1966)

Table 4.2 *Alfie*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	50	34	68,0
T Reduction	50	50	100
Diphthong Shift	50	43	86,0

H Dropping in *Alfie* occurs more often than it does not. 34 out of 50 cases are articulated as non-standard variant Ø.

For T Reduction, the results are rather suggestive when regarding standard vs. non-standard. No tokens were realised as [t]. Rather, non-standard variants are found in all 50 tokens analysed, with [ʔ] occurring 36 times, and [ɾ] occurring 14 times. Contrary to Charlie in *Sparrows Can't Sing*, Alfie has a majority of glottal stops over alveolar taps.

Concerning Diphthong Shift in *Alfie*, there is a majority of non-standard variants. 43 tokens are realised as [aɪ], while the remaining seven are pronounced [eɪ].

The percentage scores for *Alfie* show that non-standard variants are very noticeably present. While H Dropping occurs often, but not as often as was maybe expected, both T Reduction and Diphthong Shift show a strong presence in the material. And as in *Sparrows Can't Sing*, T Reduction has the strongest presence out of the three variables.

4.2.3 *All or Nothing* (London, 2002)

Table 4.3. *All or Nothing*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	37	26	70,3
T Reduction	50	50	100
Diphthong Shift	50	50	100

For this film, only 37 audible tokens of possible H Dropping were secured. Out of these, a majority of 26 instances adhered to the non-standard variant Ø.

There are no realisations of standard variant [t] for T Reduction. Instead, all 50 tokens were realised as non-standard variants. These were divided between 44 realisations of [ʔ], four realisations of [ɾ], and two of Ø.⁵ We find that [ʔ], which is the most non-standard variant out of [ʔ] and [ɾ], is clearly the dominant variant for T Reduction. This runs contrary to what was found for *Sparrows Can't Sing* and *Alfie*. In *All or Nothing*, the alveolar tap has a limited presence.

For Diphthong Shift, the results show strong support towards a non-standard variant, with all 50 variables being recognised as [aɪ].

Considering T Reduction and Diphthong Shift, the percentage values for *All or Nothing* are categorical, both exhibiting a 100 per cent presence of non-standard varieties. H Dropping occurs in 70,3 per cent of tokens, and while this is quite a lower score than the 100 per cent scores found for the two other variants, it is still indicative of H Dropping occurring often enough for Phil to be considered a non-standard speaker with regards to the variables investigated.

⁵ Realisations of T Reduction as Ø only found in *All or Nothing*.

4.2.4 *Snatch* (London, 2000)

Table 4.4. *Snatch*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	48	15	31,3
T Reduction	50	48	96,0
Diphthong Shift	50	40	80,0

Of the total 48 tokens of possible H Dropping available for *Snatch*, the non-standard variant Ø is present in 15 cases, which puts it in a minority position.

T Reduction shows a very dominant presence in *Snatch*. 48 out of 50 tokens are realised with non-standard variants. Of these, 42 are recognised as [ʔ] and 6 as [r]. We see that [ʔ] has a much higher frequency than [r]. These numbers are not much unlike those found for *All or Nothing*.

For Diphthong Shift, we find that 40 of the tokens contain the non-standard variant [aɪ], a clear majority of cases. The other ten cases were realised with a standard variant.

It is worth noticing that H Dropping has a rather low frequency in the analysed data. In fact, the data suggest that the speaker tends to prefer standard variants when producing word-initial /h/, as Ø occurs only 31,3 per cent of the time. On the other hand, T Reduction and Diphthong Shift exhibit a strong presence of non-standard usage.

4.2.5 *A Kind of Loving* (Northern England, 1962)

Table 4.5. *A Kind of Loving*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	50	0	0
GOAT Monoph.	50	0	0
Unsplit PUT-CUT	50	31	62,0

In *A Kind of Loving*, none of the 50 FACE tokens were found to represent non-standard variant [e:]. Rather, [ei] was recorded in all instances.

No variants representing GOAT Monophthongisation were heard. All 50 tokens were, in fact, standard variants, represented by [əʊ].

In relation to Unsplit PUT-CUT, the findings suggest numbers that are more evenly spread out than those found for FACE and GOAT Monophthongisation. We find that non-standard [ʊ] is used in 31 tokens. The remaining 19 are realisations of the standard [ʌ].

The percentage values show that Monophthongisation is strictly avoided, but the shifting use between [ʊ] and [ʌ] shows a slight majority of non-standard usage. The categorical presence of diphthongs in FACE and GOAT words produces strong evidence that Vic speaks a standardised accent.

Of the three variables investigated in this film, Unsplit PUT-CUT shows ambulating employment of the non-standard [ʊ]. It is the only accent feature where a northern pattern can be heard in Vic's speech.

4.2.6 *This Sporting Life* (Northern England, 1963)

Table 4.6. *This Sporting Life*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	50	45	90,0
GOAT Monoph.	50	46	92,0
Unsplit PUT-CUT	50	47	94,0

The majority of FACE tokens in *This Sporting Life* show a non-standard variant, [e:], occurring 45 times. Standard variants, [ei], are realised in only five instances of the collected data. This suggests that FACE Monophthongisation is very common in this film.

The findings for GOAT Monophthongisation show much the same pattern as those found for FACE. Non-standard variants, [o:], are realised in 46 out of 50 instances, making Monophthongisation very common for GOAT words, as well.

For Unsplit PUT-CUT the pattern is recognisable to that seen for FACE and GOAT. While only three realisations of standard variant [ʌ] were heard, the dominant pronunciation pattern was indicated by 47 realisations of non-standard variant [ʊ].

Looking at the percentage scores for *This Sporting Life*, they are all at 90 per cent or above. This would suggest that the speaker is employing a very high degree of a regional, non-standard accent, since there are very few instances of standard variants.

4.2.7 *The Full Monty* (Northern England, 1997)

Table 4.7. *The Full Monty*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	50	22	44,0
GOAT Monoph.	50	40	80,0
Unsplit PUT-CUT	50	50	100

Here, the tokens for FACE are evenly distributed between the two variants considered. A non-standard variant, [e:], is present in 22 of the tokens analysed, while a standard variant, [eɪ], is heard in the remaining 28 cases. There is a slight preference for standard forms in FACE words.

For GOAT words there is a majority of tokens exhibiting a non-standard variant, [o:]. They amount to 40 cases. We find that standard realisations, [əʊ], are present in ten instances.

The findings for the Unsplit PUT-CUT variable are categorical. All 50 tokens analysed were identified as non-standard [ʊ].

For *The Full Monty*, the percentage scores show some interesting variation. Non-standard usage in FACE words is close to happening half the time, with 44 per cent. In other words, the speaker uses both standard and non-standard variants in FACE words, with almost equal amounts of time spent on each. Otherwise, the percentage values exhibited for GOAT Monophthongisation and Unsplit PUT-CUT can be understood as verifying a strong presence of non-standard accent features.

4.2.8 *Billy Elliot* (Northern England, 2000)

Table 4.8. *Billy Elliot*: amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	23	22	95,7
GOAT Monoph.	29	29	100
Unsplit PUT-CUT	46	46	100

The amount of data for FACE Monophthongisation in *Billy Elliot* is not as large as for the other films representing Northern England. There were no tokens deemed inaudible, so the lack of tokens is, in all plainness, down to FACE words being scarce in Billy's dialogue. Still, of the 23 tokens gathered, 22 are realisations of non-standard [e:]. Only one exhibited a standard variant [eɪ].

GOAT words are also somewhat infrequent in *Billy Elliot*, only occurring 29 times in total. The analysis shows, however, that all 29 tokens were realised as non-standard [o:].

In the case of Unsplit PUT-CUT, the analysis shows that all 46 tokens were realised as non-standard [ʊ].

Although *Billy Elliot* provided fewer tokens for analysis than what all the other films did, the high percentage of non-standard forms employed may, perhaps, allow for the most clear-cut conclusions to be made when comparing all eight films. FACE Monophthongisation occurred in 95,7 per cent of cases, while GOAT Monophthongisation and Unsplit PUT-CUT occurred 100 per cent of the time. We may therefore suggest that regional accent features have a very high occurrence in Billy's speech.

4.3 *Analyses of combined films*

In this section, two and two films will be analysed together. They are combined according to period and region, so that table 4.9 presents data from 1960s London, table 4.10 presents data

from 2000s London, table 4.11 presents data from 1960s Northern England, and table 4.12 presents data from 2000s Northern England.

Combining tokens in this way, we get results that may reveal additional aspects concerning the frequency of non-standard variants in our data.

Table 4.9. *Sparrows Can't Sing* and *Alfie*: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	100	77	77,0
T Reduction	100	98	98,0
Diphthong Shift	100	80	80,0
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	85,0

In table 4.9, tokens for all three variables from both films were added up, leaving us with 100 tokens for each variable. Looking at the percentage scores, these data may give some indication of how frequent non-standard variants were in British films based in 1960s London.

While H Dropping is less frequent in *Alfie* than it is in *Sparrow's Can't Sing*, Diphthong Shift is more frequent in the former film than in the latter. Across the two films, however, T Reduction has a high occurrence (see tables 4.1-4.2).

Altogether, table 9 suggests that non-standard forms are generally quite frequent across the two films, and especially T Reduction. The mean value for all non-standard variants in both films is 85 per cent, so that, overall, non-standard features are highly present.

Table 4.10 combines data from *All or Nothing* and *Snatch*.

Table 4.10. *All or Nothing* and *Snatch*: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	85	41	48,2
T Reduction	100	98	98,0
Diphthong Shift	100	90	90,0
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	80,4

In table 4.10, the patterns of both T Reduction and Diphthong Shift agree to a great extent between the two films (see tables 4.3-4.4). For H Dropping, table 4.10 presents this variable as being non-standard in 48,2 per cent of cases. This is somewhat misleading when investigating the respective films individually. Of the two films, *All or Nothing* has the highest occurrence of non-standard forms concerning H Dropping. *Snatch*, on the other hand, shows non-standard H Dropping in under half of cases. It is important to point out that Phil in *All or Nothing* is overall more non-standard in his speech than what Turkish is. Turkish varies in his inclusion of [h], but the data suggest he favours standard forms for initial /h/. It is Phil's preference for non-standard variant usage coupled with Turkish's preference for standard variants that produce the mean percentage score of 48,2 per cent for H Dropping.

The data for T Reduction and Diphthong Shift suggest highly frequent usage of non-standard forms in both films, so we recognise both variables as showing mainly non-standard variants.

If calculating the mean percentage score for these films, we get an 80,4 per cent presence of non-standard variants. Overall, that score indicates a strong preference for non-standard accent features in these two 2000s London films.

The next table sees data from *A Kind of Loving* and *This Sporting Life* being combined.

Table 4.11. *A Kind of Loving* and *This Sporting Life*: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	100	45	45,0
GOAT Monoph.	100	46	46,0
Unsplit PUT-CUT	100	78	78,0
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	56,3

According to table 4.11, non-standard forms are less frequently uttered in films set in Northern England in the 1960s, when contrasted with London films of the same era. FACE and GOAT words, in particular, are more often standard than they are not. These results are strongly skewed by the special case *A Kind of Loving*. Since these two films differ so drastically with regards to FACE and GOAT words, but less so to Unsplit PUT-CUT, stating any definite patterns about accent in 1960s Northern England films is difficult.

Combining data from these two films gives a mean percentage score of 56,3 per cent. There is thus still a majority of non-standard variants across the two 1960s Northern England films, if only slightly.

Table 4.12 below finishes this section by combining data from *The Full Monty* and *Billy Elliot*.

Table 4.12. *The Full Monty* and *Billy Elliot*: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	73	44	60,3
GOAT Monoph.	79	69	87,3
Unsplit PUT-CUT	96	96	100
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	84,3

The data in table 4.12 show that Unsplit PUT-CUT is highly prevalent across the two films. Non-standard forms in GOAT words are also strongly present, while the percentage of non-standard variants in FACE words is the product of quite different patterns in the two films. FACE words in *The Full Monty* are weighted slightly towards the standard spectrum of variants, suggesting variability in the speaker's employment of standard vs. non-standard variants. *Billy Elliot* shows a far more consistent pattern for FACE words, even though available data were limited (see tables 4.7-4.8).

If table 4.12 can be taken to represent speech patterns among working-class males in 2000s Northern England films, then GOAT Monophthongisation and Unsplit PUT-CUT are very much present. FACE Monophthongisation produces quite dissimilar results between the two films, producing the lowest percentage score in the table, with 60,3 per cent.

Lastly, for these two films we find that the mean percentage score of all non-standard variants amounts to 84,3 per cent, which can be considered a high score in favour of non-standard usage.

4.4 Combining non-standard tokens per region

This section will present two tables that combine all data from one particular region. Region-specific data from the 1960s and the 2000s will therefore be added up, so as to present the relative frequency of non-standard forms in one region compared to another region. We start with London.

Table 4.13. The four London films: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
H Dropping	185	118	63,8
T Reduction	200	196	98,0
Diphthong Shift	200	170	85,0
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	82,7

Table 4.13 presents numbers that may indicate accent patterns in London films over a time period of 40 years. We see that high occurrences of T Reduction and Diphthong Shift are surprisingly consistent throughout all four films, while H Dropping on average occurs 63,8 per cent of the time. This score is noticeably lower than that for T Reduction and Diphthong Shift. Overall, though, the combined data for all London films suggest that non-standard forms dominate in the portrayal of London working-class accents in these four films, throughout the 40-year period investigated. This may be further supported when finding the mean percentage value. This score suggests that non-standard forms are present in 82,7 per cent of cases when considering the four London films. This score is high enough to be considered representing a strong preference for non-standard accent features.

The next table will present combined data from the four films set in Northern England.

Table 4.14. The four Northern England films: combined amount of non-standard variants

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
FACE Monoph.	173	89	51,4
GOAT Monoph.	179	115	64,2
Unsplit PUT-CUT	196	174	88,8
<i>Mean score</i>	-	-	69,0

Table 4.14 combines findings from Northern England films spanning a time period of about 40 years. From these numbers we may find certain indications of variant usage for this region.

These numbers suggest that the maybe most well-known Northern feature, Unsplit PUT-CUT, is quite frequently encountered throughout representations of Northern English regional accents in the four films, being non-standard 88,8 per cent of the time. Percentage numbers for FACE and GOAT words are markedly lower, and this is due to a relatively low occurrence of FACE Monophthongisation in *The Full Monty*, and also the complete lack of any FACE and GOAT Monophthongisation in *A Kind of Loving*. As representative of the North of England, however, Unsplit PUT-CUT is quite frequent.

While there are occasionally great differences in use of variants between the films, combining the data in the above manner provides us with a general idea of accent patterns

across these films. Calculating the mean percentage score reveals that non-standard accent features are heard 69,0 per cent of the time in the four films set in Northern England.

Comparing tables 4.13 and 4.14, the mean percentage scores show a more frequent usage of non-standard variants in London (82,7 per cent) than in Northern England (69,0 per cent).

4.5 Combining non-standard tokens per time period

This section will focus on all films of one period, meaning that region is not considered. The following two tables should provide some indications towards the prevalence of non-standard variants across both regions, but in separate time periods. In relation to the hypothesis, tables 4.15 and 4.16 are particularly interesting.

Table 4.15. 1960s London and Northern England films: combined amount of non-standard variants

N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
600	424	70,1

Table 4.15 presents the collection of every single token from all four films representing the 1960s.

Coupled with table 4.16, this may show some important results regarding the underlying hypothesis. What is found in table 4.15 is that, overall, non-standard variants are found in 70,1 per cent of cases in all films from the 1960s that were considered.

The next table shows data from the 2000s.

Table 4.16. 2000s London and Northern England films: combined amount of non-standard variants

N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
533	438	82,2

In table 4.16, data from all four films from the 2000s have been combined.

The total number of tokens is lower than in table 4.15, but the total number of non-standard variants is higher. Altogether, there is a higher occurrence of non-standard variants in films from the 2000s, with 82,2 per cent of variants being non-standard, than there is in films from the 1960s, where non-standard variants are found in 70,1 per cent of cases.

4.6 Combining non-standard tokens from all of the eight films

This section combines all tokens analysed for this dissertation. The 1133 tokens cover all eight films, and neither time period nor region is considered. The aim is to calculate the overall presence of non-standard variants in the films studied, where the working class has been a central topic to the plot.

Table 4.17. All eight films: combined amount of non-standard variants

N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
1133	862	76,1

With the above considerations, and keeping in mind the variables analysed for this thesis, calculations suggest that the working class heroes employ non-standard variants 76,1 per cent of the time they spend talking in the eight films considered.

4.7 Mean percentage value for non-standard variants in each film

In table 4.18 below are presented the mean percentage scores for non-standard variants in each of the eight films considered.

Table 4.18. Mean percentage of non-standard variants per film

	N tokens	N non-standard	% non-standard
<i>Sparrows Can't Sing</i> (London 1963)	150	128	85,3
<i>Alfie</i> (London, 1966)	150	127	84,7
<i>All or Nothing</i> (London, 2002)	137	126	92,0
<i>Snatch</i> (London, 2000)	148	103	69,6
<i>A Kind of Loving</i> (N.E., 1962)	150	31	20,7
<i>This Sporting Life</i> (N.E., 1963)	150	138	92,0
<i>The Full Monty</i> (N.E. 1997)	150	112	74,7
<i>Billy Elliot</i> (N.E., 2000)	98	97	99,0

Calculating the mean percentage of the three variables in *Sparrows Can't Sing*, we get an 85,3 per cent presence of non-standard forms. For *Alfie*, non-standard variants fill 84,7 per cent of Alfie's speech. Finding the mean percentage of all non-standard variants in *All or Nothing*, we arrive at 92,0 per cent for Phil's speech. The mean percentage for Turkish's usage of non-standard forms in *Snatch* is 69,6 per cent. With Vic's scant usage of non-standard variants in *A Kind of Loving*, calculating the mean percentage suggests 20,7 per cent of his speech can be considered non-standard. For *This Sporting Life* we find that, overall, non-standard speech is employed 92,0 per cent of the time by the speaker Frank. Using the data presented for *The Full Monty*, the mean percentage score indicates that Gaz speaks a non-standard accent 74,7 per cent of the time. According to the present data for *Billy Elliot*, Billy has a strikingly high occurrence of non-standard variants, the mean percentage being 99,0 per cent.

Table 4.18 reveals that *A Kind of Loving* is the only film to exhibit a majority of standard forms, with only 20,7 per cent of variants being non-standard. The remaining seven

films all show a majority of non-standard variants in the variables analysed, ranging from 69,6 per cent in *Snatch* to 99,0 per cent in *Billy Elliot*.

4.8 Discussion

This dissertation hypothesises that the working-class hero of 1960s British films will have fewer regional features in his accent, while the working-class hero of British films from the 2000s will possess more regional features.

Analyses of the data seem to suggest that the hypothesis of this dissertation is partially supported. However, comments are needed.

The most interesting tables in relation to the hypothesis are tables 4.15 and 4.16. These disregard region, concentrating only on time period. Comparing these tables, we get a direct indication of general tendencies between the two time periods. We find that non-standard speech is more common in the four new films than in the four old films with, respectively, 82,2 and 70,1 per cent. Thus, the hypothesis is supported.

4.8.1 The London films

Considering the hypothesis in relation to the other tables, there are some surprising results to be found when reviewing the analysed data stemming from the London films. Looking at table 4.18, both *Sparrows Can't Sing* (85,3 per cent) and *Alfie* (84,7 per cent) exhibit a lower overall percentage score than *All or Nothing* (92,0 per cent). In that view, the hypothesis is supported, as *All or Nothing* has a higher prevalence of non-standard forms than the London films from the 1960s. However, *Snatch* has the lowest share of non-standard accents features of all London films (69,6 per cent), which is admittedly due to the low frequency of H Dropping. In the relation between *Sparrows Can't Sing* and *Alfie* on the one side, and *Snatch* on the other, the hypothesis is not supported, since the latter film's average score is lower than the scores of the two older films. Contrasting tables 4.9 and 4.10, we find that the combination of *Sparrows Can't Sing* and *Alfie* (85 per cent) has a higher frequency of non-standard variants than the combination of *All or Nothing* and *Snatch* (80,4 per cent), so that, in sum, the hypothesis is not supported with regards to London films. According to these tables, non-standard forms have a higher occurrence in the old London films than in the new London films.

Data from *Snatch* show that, for H Dropping, [h] is articulated in a majority of cases. This was not an expected pattern to be heard from the working-class character portrayed in the film. There is a surprising majority of the standard variant [h]. There is no obvious explanation for this, but it may reflect a possible change in current London speech. In a study of multi-ethnic juvenile language and language innovation in London, Kerswill (2008) presents data that suggest H Dropping in London is decreasing. He found that speakers with non-Anglo backgrounds tend to retain /h/. His conclusion suggests that some features of the English of England are influenced by immigrant Englishes. The character Turkish works in multi-ethnic milieus, often doing business with an Irish gypsy and a Russian gangster. It is possible that Turkish's distribution of H Dropping is affected by his interaction with these language cultures. It is also worth mentioning that much of Turkish's speech is in the form of voiceovers throughout the film. As these voiceover sessions may have been added in post-production, it is possible that Turkish's speech during these sessions exhibits a more careful style of speech. This has not been investigated in detail but, if true, may have affected the data.

Reviewing tables 4.13 and 4.14, these show that non-standard speech is more prevalent in London films (82,7 per cent) than it is in Northern England films (69,0 per cent). One possible reason for this is that London English may have been found to be more acceptable within the film industry in England, than Northern English has. This argument is built on the fact that the national film industry has largely been based in London and thus the local vernacular may have been the most natural and comfortable language variety to use.

It is necessary to make some further considerations regarding the use of the glottal stop [ʔ] vs. the alveolar tap [ɾ] in the four London films. Table 4.19 below displays the usage of the variants grouped under T Reduction.

Table 4.19. Amount of [ʔ] and [r] in the four London films

	T Reduction	[ʔ]	[r]	Ø
<i>Sparrows Can't Sing</i> (1963)	48	17	31	-
<i>Alfie</i> (1966)	50	36	14	-
<i>All or Nothing</i> (2002)	50	44	4	2
<i>Snatch</i> (2000)	48	42	6	-

The data presented in table 4.19 may reveal some interesting details.

As can be seen, *Sparrows Can't Sing* exhibits the highest number of occurrences of the alveolar tap. It is also the oldest of the London films. As was pointed out earlier (see section 1.7), the 1960s brought about them greater opportunities and better access to education for the lower classes. Prestige accents became accessible to regional speakers, and some chose to modify their regional accents towards the prestige variety. *Sparrows Can't Sing* was released at a time when these changes were having major consequences on the structure of the British society, and it is interesting to see the relatively frequent usage of the alveolar tap in *Sparrows Can't Sing*, as it is considered less non-standard than the glottal stop. Following this argument, one would expect *Alfie* to show an even higher number of alveolar taps. But table 4.19 shows that the alveolar tap is less frequent than in *Sparrows Can't Sing*, although still occurring often enough to be noticeable. This dissimilarity to *Sparrows Can't Sing* may instead be attributable to *Alfie* being one of the Swinging London films, which signified “a period of optimism and hedonism, and a cultural revolution” (Wikipedia.org). Such trends were certainly picked up by the film, and the characters' accents may have been affected, as well. A general conclusion to be made from the above table is that the increase in glottal stops over alveolar taps in the new London films, when compared to the old, supports the hypothesis.

Some further comments must be made for the new London films. For *All or Nothing*, the relatively high frequency of T Glottalling is expected when considering the hypothesis. The same applies for *Snatch*, where the amount of T Glottalling is also high. Reviewing the development of the British society (see section 1.7), we learn that accents have become less stigmatised in recent years. This would make for a more liberated usage of non-standard

forms, as speakers now have less reason to fear stigmatisation because of the way they speak. In light of this, it seems logical that the new London films show variants that are generally more non-standard.

The most interesting aspect regarding non-standardness is revealed when the frequency of alveolar tap usage for the two time periods is analysed. From the table above, it is clear that the alveolar tap sees less usage in the new films, having been replaced by a large majority of glottal stops. Glottal stops are considered more non-standard than alveolar taps. These data not only suggest that T Reduction has been consistently high throughout the 40-year period; they also suggest that the non-standardness of this variable has increased. As there are more cases of glottal stops, and subsequently fewer cases of alveolar taps, in the new films when compared to the old films, the hypothesis is supported when looking exclusively at T Reduction.

There is an interesting contradiction in the data for the London films in that, for the T Reduction variable (see table 4.19), the working-class hero's speech is more non-standard in the new films than in the old, thus supporting the hypothesis. Conversely, the mean percentage values for the old and new London films (see tables 4.9 and 4.11) show non-standard speech to have the highest frequency in the old films, and the lowest in the new films, thus not supporting the hypothesis.

4.8.2 The Northern England films

For the films set in Northern England, we find that *A Kind of Loving* is perhaps a film that departs the most from its contemporaries analysed here. Of the two 1960s films, *A Kind of Loving* may prove the most interesting in relation to the hypothesis. The speaker Vic uses standard variants in all tokens of FACE and GOAT words, even though most people around him, including family, colleagues and friends, speak a regional variety fitting for the film's story. He shows variability in regards to CUT words, exhibiting a small majority of non-standard variants. Overall, only 20,7 per cent of his speech can be considered non-standard, which is much lower than both *The Full Monty* (74,7 per cent) and *Billy Elliot* (99,0 per cent). Viewed this way, the hypothesis is supported, as the percentage of non-standard forms is higher in the new films than in *A Kind of Loving*. But it is necessary also to take a look at *This Sporting Life*, where 92,0 per cent of Frank's speech is non-standard. This is higher than *The Full Monty* and only slightly lower than *Billy Elliot*. A comparison of the respective scores of *This Sporting Life* and *The Full Monty* is not in favour of the hypothesis, whereas comparing the respective scores of *This Sporting Life* and *Billy Elliot* is. We should therefore consider

tables 4.11 and 4.12. According to these, the combined data from *A Kind of Loving* and *This Sporting Life* (56,3 per cent) may indicate non-standard speech to have been less common in 1960s Northern England films portraying the working classes than in the films from the 2000s, as exemplified by the combined percentage values from *The Full Monty* and *Billy Elliot* (84,3 per cent). In that case, the hypothesis would not be supported.

Taking a closer look at some of the Northern England films, we find the percentage values for *A Kind of Loving* to be quite revealing. First, it is important to note the following; the main character, Vic, shows a speech pattern that does not adhere to the regional norms of his community. While his colleagues, friends and family all frequently exhibit features of Northern English accents, he only does so for CUT words, and then only 62 per cent of the time.

A Kind of Loving is the oldest film out of the eight analysed in this thesis. Its year of release (1962) is important because it was made available to film audiences just prior to future cultural events that would work in favour of regional accents. It has, for example, been argued by the BBC that RP had a higher intelligibility rate among the British people than regional accents had, while a study indicated that children understood their own accent better than another accent (see section 1.7). It is reasonable to suggest that Vic speaks an accent so unlike that of his family, friends and colleagues, because traditional belief argued that a standard accent would provide an audience with a better semantic understanding of the dialogue. Also worth noting is that, at the time of the film's release in early 1962, The Beatles were still a few months away from gaining mainstream popularity in Great Britain, popularising regional accents in the process, and Scouse in particular. With the production of *A Kind of Loving* being situated in between these two events, it is reasonable to suggest that they may have affected the development of the character Vic. It is a valid argument to make that, at the time of the film's production, regional and Northern accents were still to gain widespread acceptance and popularity in Britain, as The Beatles were still to have their breakthrough.

It has previously been mentioned that Unsplit PUT-CUT is one of the most recognisable features of Northern English, so the presence of this and lack of monophthongs in FACE and GOAT words may be the result of process where *A Kind of Loving* would feature a regional main character (established by the presence of Unsplit PUT-CUT), but a regional main character who would speak mainly a standard accent because standard accents enjoyed higher acceptance in British society at the time of the film's production, as detailed above.

Coronation Street had run for a couple of years, creating awareness around regional accents, when *This Sporting Life* was released in 1963. But it was the breakthrough of The Beatles the year before that really helped popularising Northern regional accents, and it is certainly not unlikely that the high frequency of regional accent features in *This Sporting Life* is partly due to the impact of The Beatles.

The Full Monty, where the story is set to Sheffield, shows an interesting pattern regarding FACE words (see table 4.7). While GOAT and CUT words are pronounced as expected, FACE words are showing a different pattern. Rather surprisingly, there is a small majority of standard variants, as non-standard variants are present in only 44 per cent of cases. An explanation may be found in an earlier study on Sheffield pronunciation. Stoddart et al (1999) performed a study on the Sheffield dialect in the 1990s. They found that, for FACE words, it was common with “[e:] for all groups, sometimes with a slight [ɪ]-glide (...) [and] [eɪ] in words such as *eight*, *straight*, *weight* for all groups” (Stoddart et al 1999: 74). Explaining our data in light of the findings by Stoddart et al, the present results for FACE words may appear less surprising.

4.8.3 Final comments

It should be noted that there was generally a high occurrence of non-standard forms in all the old films, with the exception of *A Kind of Loving* (20,7 per cent). Table 4.18 shows that the lowest mean percentage value was 84,7 per cent (Alfie) for the old films, while the highest value was found for *This Sporting Life*, with 92,0 per cent. Only two of the new films could match *This Sporting Life* in relation to the high frequency of non-standard accent features, and those were *All or Nothing*, also with 92,0 per cent, and *Billy Elliot*, with 99,0 per cent. On the other hand, *Snatch*, with 69,6 per cent, and *The Full Monty*, with 74,7 per cent, were the only new films to show less non-standard speech when compared to the lowest scoring old film, *Alfie*. This pattern was not expected, and may be attributable to language attitudes already having changed drastically at the time of the old films’ release dates, still with the notable exception of *A Kind of Loving*, which is the oldest film investigated.

To be able to make an overall generalisation of the data and relate this to the hypothesis, another look at tables 4.15 and 4.16 tells us that the hypothesis is supported. But it is important to modify this conclusion, and rather give the hypothesis status as being partially supported. *A Kind of Loving* is the one film that marks a distinct disparity to the rest of the

material, and this has skewed the results. Also, going into detail in the data through the numerous tables presented reveals small, but important, divergences.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Pavel Chekov: “Ensign Authorisation Code: nine-five-[w]ictor-[w]ictor-two.”
Computer: “Authorisation not recognised.”
Pavel Chekov: “Ensign Authorisation Code: nine-five-[v]ictor-[v]ictor-two.”
Computer: “Access granted.”

Russian accented Ensign Pavel Chekov, *Star Trek* (2009)

5.1 Summary of results

The main aim of this thesis has been to investigate whether the working-class hero would show fewer instances of non-standard accent features in British films of the 1960s, than he would in British films from the 2000s.

The overall findings (see tables 4.15-4.16) support the hypothesis, suggesting that this is indeed so. But there are many nuances found in the data, and they all provide crucial information, as laid out in the numerous tables in chapter 4. For example, we learn that the old London films were found to exhibit a higher mean value of non-standard variants, than did the new London films, with 85,0 per cent against 80,4 per cent, respectively (see tables 4.9 and 4.10). For the Northern England films, the results were in line with expectations. The old films had a mean value of 56,3 per cent non-standard variants, while the new films had a corresponding value of 84,3 per cent (see tables 4.11 and 4.12).

To create a stronger fundament on which to build this thesis, data were collected from two different geographical regions. What the data reveal, in relation to this approach, is that the highest mean value concerning the degree of non-standardness in the two regions is in favour of the London films. Tables 4.13 and 4.14 tell us that the mean score for the London films shows non-standard variants to be present in 82,7 per cent of the tokens analysed, while for Northern England that score is 69,0 per cent.

Table 4.18 shows that the degree of non-standardness between the eight films varies somewhat, but points towards the non-standard end of the scale for seven of the eight films, *A Kind of Loving* being the exception.

It was also possible to determine the degree of non-standardness for T Reduction in the London films, as the thesis accounted for both the glottal stop [ʔ] and the alveolar tap [ɾ]. The data found here suggest that the alveolar tap was more common in the old London films,

while the glottal stop was the more common variant in the new London films (see table 4.19). This was in line with the hypothesis.

If we are to draw any conclusions from the various treatments of the data, we may conclude that the hypothesis is supported with regards to the main concern of the thesis, but that a closer inspection of the data reveals important nuances, as detailed above. Interestingly, there was a surprisingly high frequency of non-standard forms in three of the four old films, so that the differences between the old films and the new films were not as great as anticipated. The hypothesis is supported, but to a lesser degree than expected.

5.2 Critique of my own work

In producing this work, certain choices and delimitations would have to be employed. For data analysis, an auditory technique was used. Using this technique, recognition of variants is based solely on the researcher's hearing, so that the data analyses are founded on a subjective experience. The researcher could have opted for an instrumental analysis, where data analyses would be processed through computer programmes. Milroy and Gordon (2003) write that the visual representation of speech signals made possible by speech analysis programmes, allows for a greater level of detail in the variants analysed. A select part of the variant may also be analysed, something which is not possible using auditory techniques. Precise measurement is one of the benefits of an instrumental analysis, and may prove especially helpful in regards to analysing variables with continuous qualities. Milroy and Gordon also point out that instrumental techniques make analyses more objective, since the analyses are not based on hearing alone, but also validated by the instruments used.

Milroy and Gordon further state that instrumental techniques may also complicate the researcher's work. The level of detail provided may make it necessary to employ a normalisation process, where a variety of speakers are made comparable through normalising the data stemming from the physical idiosyncrasies of individual speakers' vocal tracts. Furthermore, instrumental techniques are time-consuming and dependent on training of the researcher to be used in a beneficial manner.

There are several reasons as to why I opted for an auditory technique. The treatment of the data did not necessitate a great level of detail, as variables were categorised into a binary system, where they were either standard or non-standard. Concerning the variables where variants ranged along a continuum, the dividing aspect was, for some variables, whether there was a diphthong or a monophthong present in the data. These variants would not prove too

difficult to categorise, while Diphthong Shift was perhaps the most problematic to categorise using an auditory technique. However, steps were taken towards eliminating deficiencies inherent in the technique employed. First, a relatively large amount of tokens per variable was analysed. This lessens the problem of faulty recognition of variants, as their impact is less noticeable the larger a collection of tokens is. Second, parts of the material were listened to by my supervisor, and there was sufficient agreement between us for my analyses to be valid.

Data were drawn from a total of eight films. Given that one of the films turned out to be a special case, but also the one to strongly support the hypothesis, data were perhaps skewed. This could be alleviated through incorporating more films in a larger study. On the other side, a sufficient number of tokens were collected, so that the data are representative of the films in question.

Statistical tests have not been employed. This was considered to be beyond the scope of this thesis, as the amount of data collected is relatively small.

Not considered in this thesis, is the background of the actors. It is a fact that some of the actors are not from the same geographical area as the character they portray. The consequences of this are that the actors' native accents may be quite different from the characters' accents. On the other side, actors, and other people, may very well speak an accent that tells us nothing about which region they are from. A person's particular accent can be the result of many influences, such as parents, friends, colleagues and education. Furthermore, it is likely that one of the qualities of a trained actor is the ability to modify one's accent to better fit the character that is to be portrayed.

5.3 Contributions made by this thesis

It is hoped that the work presented in this thesis has contributed to an understanding of accent usage in British films. The study has accounted for both temporal and regional aspects, providing new research in the field of language attitudes and accent studies. It reviews previous findings concerning language attitudes, and employs this knowledge in investigating the usage of film accent through a 40-year period, showing that there has, indeed, been a change in attitudes towards regional accents, and providing data that, overall, support the belief that the degree of non-standardness in accent usage in films reflects the attitudes towards regional accent features in British society. Previous research has confirmed that regional accents are less stigmatised and more prevalent in arenas previously unavailable to working-class and regional speakers, in today's society in Britain. This study has produced

data that suggest a similar development has been cultivated in British film. In studying both London and Northern England, the present thesis provides an understanding of language attitudes on a wider national scale, increasing the validity of the findings.

5.4 Future research

The work presented here may be considered an introductory study to language attitudes and accent usage in films. It has focused on one character per film, and only on working-class males in British films. A larger scale study could introduce other parameters for delimiting the material. Several characters per film could be investigated, taking into account speech behaviour in relation to who the listener is. Would the main character speak in a different manner to his or her colleagues, than to one's supervisor? Another point of interest would be to include gender as a factor. The portrayal of women's speech throughout time and region would surely make for an interesting study, as well studying the linguistic dynamic between husband and wife, by studying how the family institution has been portrayed in relevant films.

Another possible extension of the work laid down here, is focusing on a much wider time frame. The first talkies were released towards the end of the 1920s, which would provide a researcher with around 80 years of film material from which speech can be analysed. Also, further studies need not be limited to British film, language, and culture.

In studying language, my thesis only considered accent features. The wider concept of dialect was not part of the study. However, looking at dialect features such as grammar and vocabulary may provide numerous themes worthy of study. If this thesis were to include dialect features, it would be natural to look at whether the working-class heroes also employed regional words and slang, and to what extent. Have, for example, some films popularised certain words? In today's media-centric world, word dispersion through media is a phenomenon of high actuality, and it is not far-fetched to think that *The Full Monty* provided the public with a greater understanding of what 'the full monty' refers to.

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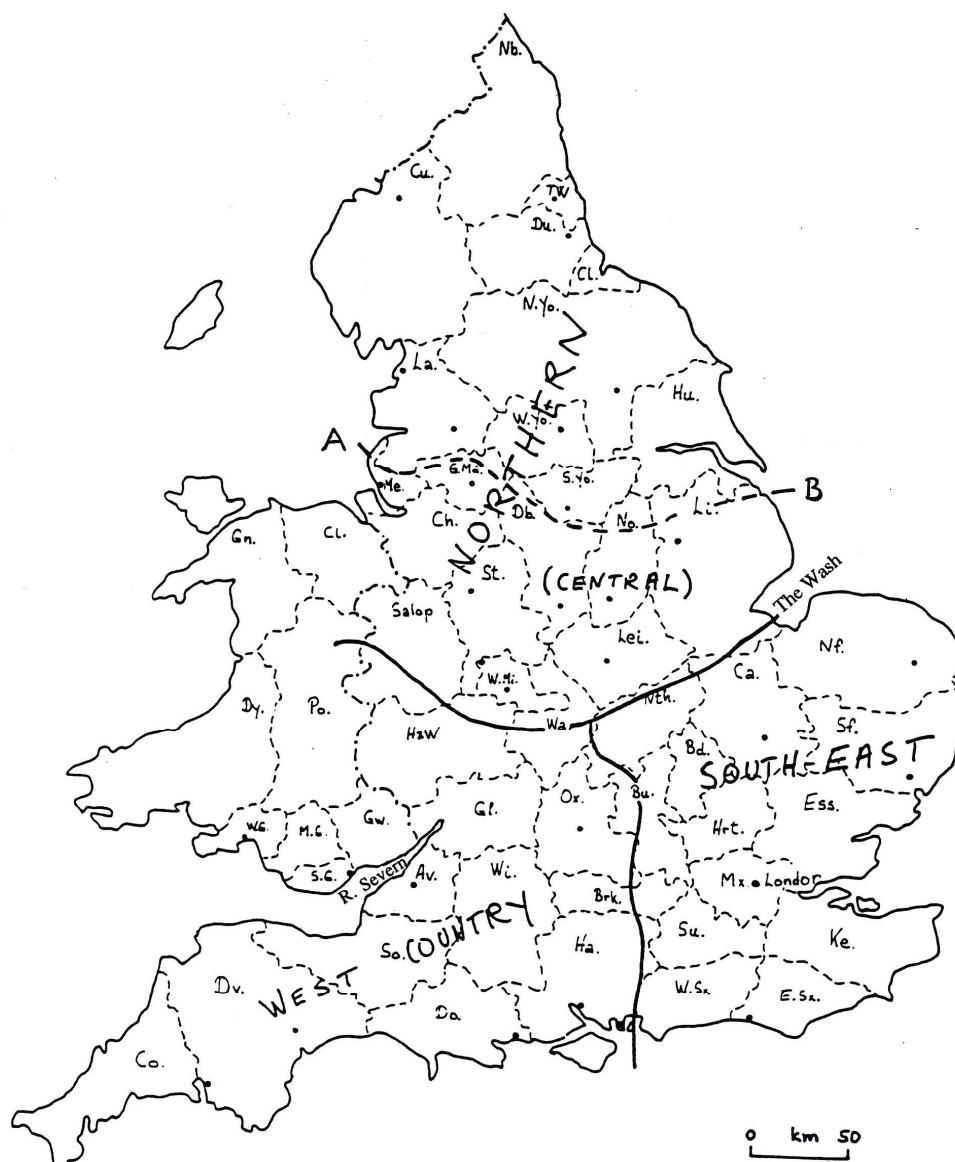
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Appendix A: Map of the Severn-Wash line

MAPS

Map 1. Major accent areas: England

A – B = the approximate southern limit of /e:/
in FACE and /o:/ in GOAT (see §38)



Map taken from Rydland (2000: 44)